

THE BOOK LEAGUE MONTHLY

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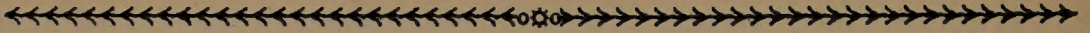
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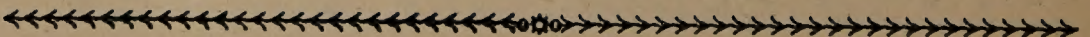
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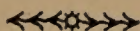


THE
BOOK LEAGUE MONTHLY

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A NOVEL
of
POWER AND DELICACY

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH



THERE are two ways of writing an historical novel. One is to prepare the scene elaborately and to explain for the benefit of the dear simple reader all that he is supposed not to know concerning the manners, habits, and institutions of the society into which he is about to be introduced. The other is to allow persons and events to explain themselves—to begin a story of the thirteenth century as though it were a story of the twentieth and to trust to one's skill to make everything self-explanatory.

It is hardly necessary to add that this second is the only legitimate method. Every work of art really worthy of the name contains within itself all that is necessary for the comprehension of it and only a bastard poem, or picture, or novel requires a gloss. Any characters or any motives which are too remote from us to be directly understandable, any which we cannot imaginatively assimilate, have no place in fiction. They may belong to science, to psychology, or to any department of human study which consists primarily of a body of knowledge but they cannot belong to art, because artistic feeling differs from knowledge just in the immediacy with which it becomes a part of our own intimate experience.

Whatever has to be *explained* remains outside of us; only what we *recognize* can become the occasion of an esthetic experience.

The author of *The Lady of Laws* treats her characters as though they were our contemporaries and she does so because she knows instinctively that she can write fiction about them only in so far as they are actually that. She does not say that these events took place in a certain remote century. Neither does she warn us that we must remember that in those days people thought thus and acted so. Instead she begins to record and describe exactly as though we had all lived out our lives in Renaissance Bologna. And because she knows how to seize upon those thoughts and those incidents which are as essentially real to us as they would be to the people of any other time she actually makes us the contemporaries of her tyrant and her scholar. We have, to be sure, never lived through experiences just like these; it is extremely unlikely that we ever will; but we *could*. At least the potentiality for such feelings and such deeds is part of us and for that reason the story of them can be completely real and convincing and pertinent for us.

The theme of her story is the contrast between two possible and logical ways of life—the way of power and the way of renunciation. The first is embodied in the strong and ruthless ruler; the second in the scholar-lady whose strength was of a different kind. Throughout the story they clash and yet in another sense they never meet. Each conquers and yet neither is really conquered. Neither can understand the other's aims and neither can understand the other's victory. They live in two different worlds, two different dimensions, which have no contact with one another. There is possible no real decision between them. One may choose between the two Ways, but one cannot compare them.

The Renaissance furnishes the proper milieu for such a tale, not because the contrast between the way of power and the way of renunciation was real only then, but because in that age the choice had to be more sharply made than is always necessary to-day. In our tamed and regulated society we compromise. We take as much of the world as we can and then we draw back, or, perhaps, we love the flesh when we get the opportunity and God when we must. At least a considerable number of us serve two masters and never even ask ourselves to which we have really given our allegiance. But in the Renaissance men were more likely to be keenly aware of a choice that must be made. It was either fight—perpetually and bloodily—or renounce; one belonged to one world or to the other. One could not dally or shift. If one chose the flesh

one lived the life of the flesh as fully and as furiously as the flesh can bear; if one renounced the flesh one renounced it utterly.

No short quotation can suggest either the power or the complicated harmony of Susanne Trautwein's novel; but one citation can illustrate the delicacy of her perceptions. The tyrant Lambertazzi has taken upon his horse the infant son borne him by the Lady of Laws as the result of a violation. To win the son and torture the mother he allows the child to draw his sword from the scabbard:

"Ecco!" he cried, holding the sword crossways over his body. "What is it for?"

"For that." Lambertazzi showed him his cut hand. He looked and because it was now beginning to hurt him he made a wry face.

"Now we shall see you cry," said Lambertazzi.

Mario slowly lifted his eyes up to him; but he did not cry.

Lambertazzi pulled an apple out of his pocket. "That was well done," he said. "We must be friends. So we'll eat an apple." He broke it in two, and gave Mario one-half, which the child ate with his blood-stained hand.

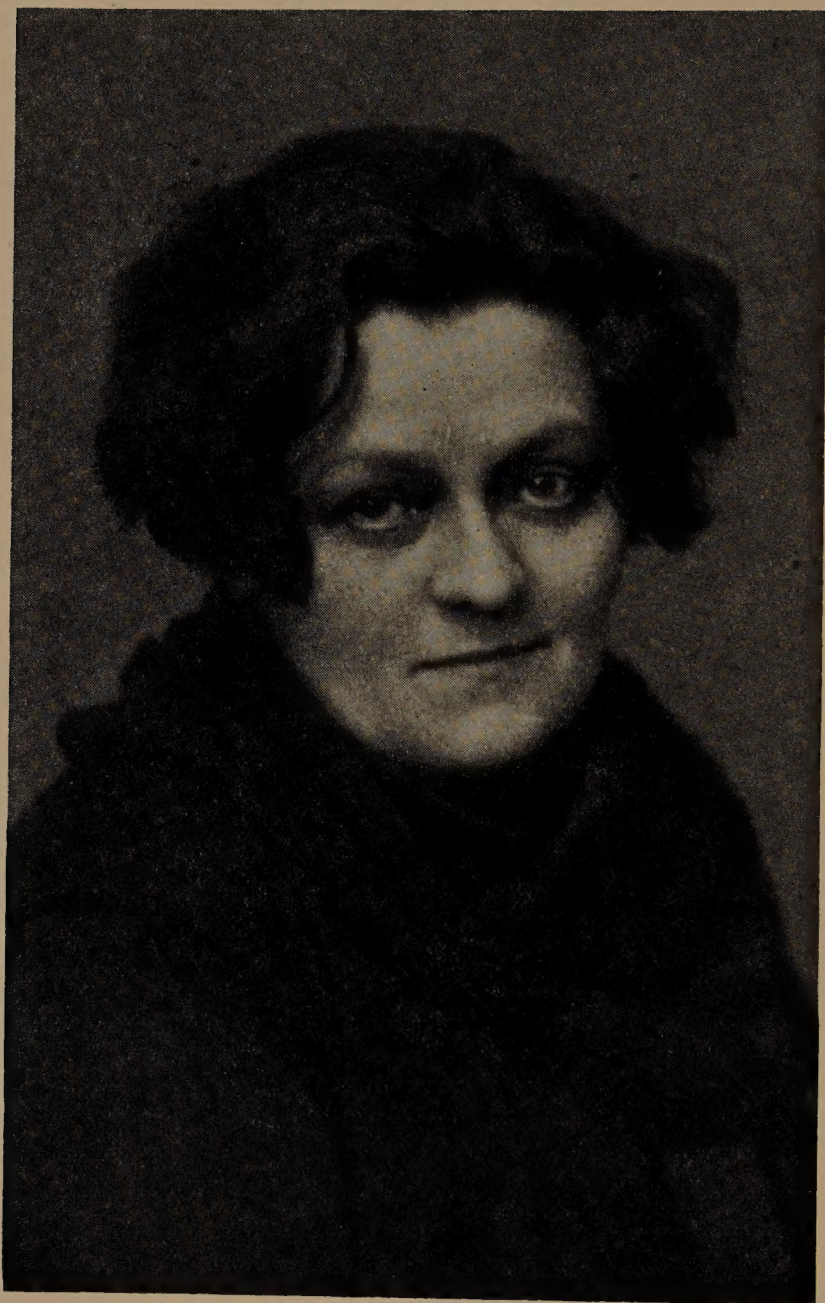
"Do you know now what the sword is for?"

Mario nodded, and went on eating.

"Tell me."

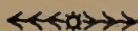
"To cut ourselves, and not to cry."

"He's your son right enough, Law-Lady," cried Lambertazzi.

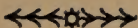


SUSANNE TRAUTWEIN

THE LADY OF LAWS



SUSANNE TRAUTWEIN



NEW YORK
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1929

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BY ELLIOT HOLT



Foreword



To preserve things exceptional, man erects special places wherein posterity may reflect upon them with wonder. What is exceptionally righteous he shelters in churches; what is exceptionally wicked he puts into the chamber of horrors. Continue this process upwards and downwards to infinity, and we have Heaven above and Hell beneath. But compared with Heaven and Hell such places can hardly be said to retain their distinguishing significance. So spiritual dwelling-places are cheap—really they are exceedingly cheap.

What is missing is the third place. Where is the locality which should be dedicated to the silent contemplation of those who in their humanity achieved great things; for whose description and delineation the artist needs neither wings nor claws to assist his imagination? There is no such place.

Answer me not—the theatre, or the picture gallery. Objectivity is not their aim. In the picture gallery æsthetics and the history of art zealously do all they can to deaden their material; working against any inclination of the public to discern therein the human. They might have spared themselves the pains. It is enough that here a few hundred or thousand masterpieces are kept in a narrow gallery, like preserved peaches in a glass jar. In the theatre—as actors and dramatists know full well—what is merely human is driven out of existence. And it must be so, as long as there are theatres and dramas. The theatre, like everything that appeals to the masses, thrives on exaggeration and emphasis.

But where is it possible to behold calmly the Ego of a person, the individual personality which belongs only to that person, and which never recurs in time or space? Is it worthy of regard, this Ego, because of its uniqueness? Nay, rather because, in spite of its uniqueness, it is a thing of the many. The more distinctive a man is, or, in other words, the more a man is himself, the more strongly does his nature reassert itself in the blood of his descendants.

Where is the place that will serve for such meditative contemplation, without our indulging in religious ecstasy or titillating horror, without the learned contributions of the picture gallery or the limelight technicalities of the theatre? There is no such place, and rightly so. Is it not said: "The

foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head?"

And where shall we put the fair Lady of Laws? She herself, the original, departed this life in Bologna long ago, several centuries ago. Let her come to life in a novel. There she can breathe in all her natural strength and peace. There she may be seen in her own atmosphere, as if against a golden background; not as a saint, but just to be seen and understood. And if at times she draws too near to the beholder, so that her form is lost in the clearness of the detail, may she quietly slip back into the novel. For the novel has, in spite of its artistic limitations, spacious paths, fringed by limitless horizons. And if she thus becomes too distant a figure in the perspective, how fortunately circumstanced we are! There is no need, as in the theatre, to relieve our feelings with a shrug of the shoulders, or the rustling of programmes, when fate seizes the hero pick-a-back and runs off with him. No, in the novel she goes on living, the fair Lady of Laws. The hand can always turn back the pages of the book, and the eye glance again over the lines. Thus we can linger over a sentence, as if standing before a picture, yet without the whole range of contemporary paintings gnashing their teeth at the beholder from all sides, as it is in a gallery.

The novel is a retreat good for mankind. In it one lives with nothing, and yet with everything—Diogenes in his tub. If, it be retorted, Diogenes is long since dead, one may say, against or rather in support of the contention, so is the Lady of Laws, and therein lies one of her virtues, indeed her greatest virtue. And let this also be added: Amen, would that I were as far.





THE LADY OF LAWS

CHAPTER I



Ælia Lælia Crispis
Nec vir, nec mulier, nec androgyna,
Nec puella, nec juvenis, nec anus,
Nec casta, nec meretrix, nec pudica,
Sed omnia.

MARMORA FELSINEA.

THE bright morning with its wind had played huntsman to the clouds, piling them up long-legged from the horizon. It was forenoon, and warm. Flung hither and thither, the windy shapes fled into clusters. Yellow in the sunlight they spread over the whole sky and stared round upon Bologna. Bells rang from its little towers, which stood up thin as ship-masts over the roofs crowding flatly together. Through the city shot the river, spanned by a great stone bridge here and a little foot-bridge there. Fish baskets, oranges, maize-ears, red and yellow tulips piled in bundles, garnished their narrow parapets.

The Gothic church in the middle of the town with its wide square in front began to hum; it was just half-past nine. Everywhere, in obedience to its voice, all trade and traffic ceased. Each new cry of the bells seemed to mount in impressiveness. The chattering many-coloured street-throng drew towards the church of San Petronio, and in the wide square there was a squeezing and ranging into rows. The crowd stared at the noble men and women, splendid in their heavy velvet and chains of office, as they moved into the church, pierced through and through in the quivering heat of the square by the thousand-fold arrows of the sunlight. They went through the high door into twilight and cool.

Around the town rose hills, and one of them bore a pleasure-house. It lay on the slope towards San Petronio, between two knolls covered by an old park. Before all the windows blue linen curtains were drawn; for the house-front facing the town caught the full beams of the sun.

The flat roof, for the moment, was without an awning; and on a cut-glass goblet the light played so brilliantly that the eye could not behold it. The trap-door, under which a narrow staircase crawled upwards to the

roof, was pushed on high by a black-haired head. But only the man's skull bore the weight as he flung it backwards. His hands were pulling at his long hose of green velvet—somewhat faded—trying to tug it through his leathern girdle. His shirt, pulled out loosely above his girdle, cooled his body with its incense of fine washed linen. The man yawned and pushed his brown sunburnt arms far through his cuffs.

"Already out of bed?" asked a second, who was sitting at a table.

"What a row that bell-metal is making!" said the half-dressed one, and walked yawning across the roof-floor. "Can't the holy Petronius hold his jaw for the only morning that Lambertazzi sleeps it out?"

"Zitto, zitto," murmured he who was sitting at the table, his gaze turned upwards in the direction of the dwelling-place of saints. Then he raised his flat hand, and moved it against the sky, as if to rub out the other man's words. And he did not let himself be disturbed in his contemplations.

In the square of San Petronio there was something to see. A dozen purple-mantled gentlemen, standing right and left of the church door, ranged themselves into two rows, and received a figure which came unaccompanied through the sun's heat over the wide square. Her surcoat flapped round her; and, before Lambertazzi could tell whether it was man or woman, she was inside the church, and the full row of purple-mantled doctors locked themselves behind her. They blocked the entrance, and the church door shut fast. Then the brazen voice of the holy Petronius went still. Outside you could hear the people chattering.

"Who was that?" asked Lambertazzi.

He had been absent a long time from Bologna. The war was ended. But the difficult negotiations which followed had called him quickly back to Milan. He was here only on a flying visit. Between the discussions he hurriedly greeted his native soil as best he could. No one could say whether he would stay or suddenly go away. The campaign had been full of significance, for Lambertazzi himself much more than for his town Bologna. Ability had raised him to where he belonged, the first place. Fame, indeed, he had not won, but his work had been fully effective. It meant a great career, for Lambertazzi was only just thirty. Now he was obtaining secret orders for the Milan negotiations. He called them orders, but what they were to lead to was full power.

He had arrived the day previous, come late in the night, and secretly settled himself in this villa. His host was Valerio Sfiga, a comrade. He had not spent the night in the Burgher-House, nor in the Palazzo Lam-

bertazzi where Mona Clarice, his wife, awaited him. In the earlier part of the year she had borne him his first son; and he was looking forward to seeing the child. But from the scene of war he had brought with him a mistress, a woman of Provence, a very lively piece of baggage. She took up much of his attention, although he had already known her five months. He had found that he could not break away from her when he left Milan; and now he did not want to bring her to his lady, Mona Clarice, to lodge her under his own roof, doubly holy to him since it sheltered the head of his little son, the next Lambertazzi. Thus Sfiga, who had reached home a short time before him, did him the favour of providing for his person as well as for his little Provence adventure.

There stood Lambertazzi, a thick-set swarthy man, with deep-set eyes; golden rings in his ears. His hands went on tugging at his green velvet hose which would not draw conveniently through his girdle. He stared blinking towards San Petronio, where the ceremony had begun—held for that solitary unaccompanied figure which in fluttering mantle had come over the square at the last moment.

“Who was that?” asked Lambertazzi.

“That was Olimpia di Porta Ravegnana.”

“Ravegnana?” questioned Lambertazzi, emphasising the name. “Daughter of Giacomo?”

“Quite right. His only child. You studied *Codicem-repetitæ-prælectionis* under him—at least as much as you cared to listen to. Was it much? Or only a little?”

“It was enough,” replied Lambertazzi, looking inquisitively towards the closed church door.

At this answer, Sfiga’s attention was no less inquisitively riveted upon Lambertazzi. “Enough? The answer is just like you. You would never admit having too much or too little of anything, O Bartolommeo—never.”

“The word ‘enough’ I tell you,” said the army leader, half standing, half sitting, “is quite right in this instance, for look you, the law should be studied only by men of action. Otherwise it is tongue-play, mere twitting, has no sensible aim. Moreover, a man of action soon sees what is the point of this so-called law; finds a good name for the exercise of violence. Law! That’s the name. Might is Right. It is simply a matter of reflection. You may sow your wild oats, but not so completely as to lose your head. I learnt that from Giacomo di Porta. Whether I learnt it in a short time or a long is unimportant. I understand the faculty of law

well enough to know how with impunity to put into my pocket, to my own account as well as to Bologna's, as much of this world as seems good to me. Is that clear?"

"Quite," said Sfiga.

"Good. That is the right way for a man of the world to study law. I give old Giacomo all thanks due. He received his fee, and we are quits. So this was his daughter. What's she doing inside that place? Is it her wedding?"

"Quite the opposite," said Sfiga laughing.

"Quite the opposite? What do you mean? Is she going to be a nun?"

"No!" Sfiga laughed still more. "As little as your lady Luys down below."

"By all good and evil spirits," exclaimed Lambertazzi amazed, "what otherwise can one honourably do with the daughter of a professor of Law? Or with a woman at all, for that matter?"

"Quite so," said Sfiga. "But now pay attention to me. This beautiful lady of Bologna—she is said to be beautiful, for I have not seen her, as she only recently returned from Paris—this Ravegnana, only child of the famous Giacomo, is this day to be consecrated Instructress in the Faculty of Law at Bologna. She has already obtained her doctor's degree in Paris. And there, now, in San Petronio, while I am telling you this, she is being arrayed in the robes of the University of Bologna, and swears some kind of Justinian or simple Catholic oath to the transaction. You are amazed? But you see, my dear fellow, you son of this town, that while you are stretching your limbs outside it, something quite unusual is going on."

Valerio Sfiga looked up sideways at the stupefied Lambertazzi, who was brooding darkly. Then he went on: "Make of it what you like. At any rate the city now has two children of promise, a son and a daughter. Hurl the world's disk on high with your Lambertazzi cranium as you have just done to the trap-door; but this lady of Bologna will be there all the same to bring it back to the horizontal with her firm and gentle hands. Thus each sex through its own peculiar virtue makes itself indispensable."

"No! No!" cried the army leader loudly. "What's all that to do with the peculiar virtue of sex—that down there?" He nodded in the direction of San Petronio, and snorted. "A lovely sort of woman they'll soon make of her. Be quite certain that it's a monstrous mistake. What's a woman's right place?"

The tone of his voice turned the question into something between rhetoric and sincerity. The answer lent itself to the same quality, and he gave it himself. For Sfiga did not muse about women, merely delighted in them and took them with a shrug of the shoulders, had indeed the right outlook; it was no affair of his what they did or where they came from.

The army leader first of all gave his answer in dumb show. That is the good old way, to act pantomime, to give your answer in short gestures, in silent action, before you speak. So he nodded sharply, first in the direction of his own house, the Palazzo Lambertazzi, then towards the hill San Cristoforo, where stood a cloister of the Clarissa nuns, then downwards where Donna Luys was sleeping, her head of black tresses reposing on her white arm.

"What's a woman's right place? First of all it's in the house, in a well-regulated man's house, like my Mona Clarice. Secondly, it's in a cloister. Think of my sister, Donna Perpetua. Thirdly"—he seemed to be looking through the floor into the bowels of the earth, at the same time smiling fiercely and darkly—"thirdly, it's in a proper man's bed, like my Donna Luys. With this threefold way of life any sex can and should be contented, even one so insatiable as woman's. Is it clear? Well then, what does a woman want with a professorial chair?"

"But what does that matter? They can't hurt you," said Sfiga.

Lambertazzi blew his nose. "I am Bartolommeo Lambertazzi. Therefore the mightiest and newest star in heaven disturbs me not. Let the topsy-turvy half-men and their like trample the flat world still flatter. I'll take good care that the full-fledged complete man is there every now and then to fling up mountains when desire so shakes him. . . . Ah! there is the stage play," he shouted. "They've not had enough of the infamy at God's altar, now God's sun must see and behold."

He leaned over the balustrade and watched the festival-crowd stream out of the church door. Right and left there was a surging and scurrying of red and white feathers, of velvet robes, a rattling of medallions on long chains, a rustling of fans, gowns, and ladies' high ruffles. Lambertazzi watched this splendour, busy all the time in tugging his green velvet hose through his leathern girdle. Now the church steps were clear. All stared into the darkness of the church. In due time she appeared, the daughter of Giacomo di Porta Ravegnana, Doctor of Laws, and now arrayed in the robes of office of Bologna. The Rector moved towards her from the row of doctors. There was a short ceremony, for the people

who filled the square of San Petronio had to have their amusement too.

Olimpia di Porta Ravegnana, who stood in the doorway with lowered head, walked forward. She turned her gaze towards the Rector, who stood directly opposite, and after a short time gave him her hand. The commotion dimly reminded Lambertazzi of that legendary scene where a Holy One wedded Poverty, though in this instance it was Learning. Lambertazzi, accustomed in every movement and position of life to be doing something, picked up the glistening goblet. In its facets burned the sun. Brightly the glass glowed in his hands. Skilfully he sought to cast a beam of light into the lady's eyes. It was carefully judged; after a short time he caught the beam of light at the right angle and flung it on her with all the passion of the sun. Lambertazzi stood firm, his legs spread out, a wizard in his tower. He was enchanted to see how Ravegnana suffered. She moved her head now right, now left, she drew deep into the shadow of the church arch, then came out again into the full shimmering light which danced over the square. But it did not help her. Always the beam of light rested on her eyelids, half blinding her. Then she closed her eyes and stood impassive till the end of the consecration speech, in a seeming humility which she did not really feel.

The ceremony came to an end. The people for that reason, if for no other, broke into great applause.

The scholars clustered round Ravegnana, and moved with her swiftly away. Soon the crowd too dispersed.

"So that was the nonsense!" said Lambertazzi. "I am glad that somebody was there to play the fool in it." He put down the crystal. "Clear, isn't it? Good. Now it is time to do something sensible. Next move to the Burgher-House. Then to my son. I wonder if he looks like me."





CHAPTER II



RAVEGNANA went back to the house of her parents. She was twenty-four years old; she had left it very young. When she walked about the house and then down the stone steps into the little garden it was always as if her childhood's time had not left her. In the garden she came to a cherry tree; a laden twig stroked her face, and she stretched out her hand to pluck the red cherries. Yet no, not without turning to the green shadowed window of the ground floor, not without asking half in spirit, half with her lips: "May I, mother?" But nobody was there; the red woollen curtains hung silent from their rings. She stood in the room above, and arranged her books as her old father did. She began to read, found books of her father's which she had never seen before, books on subjects which did not belong to his legal domain, which only slightly touched it, like theology; some entirely alien to it, like geometry or cabbalism. If such came to her hand, turning over the leaves, her eyes on the strange twisted red, blue and golden illuminated lettering, she would go to the little door which led to her father's bedroom. She would lift up the blue woollen curtain, and with lowered gaze take one step into the narrow room. "Is this good for me, father?" she would ask. The bed, just a narrow trestle, was now bare; only a quilt of white wool lay folded at the foot. The table of unpolished wood bore nothing save a crucifix. There was no bookstand; there were no writing materials. In the window bloomed blue lobelias in glazed vases as before. But the old man was dead, and silent was the quiet but powerful fire of his voice and presence. In the evening twilight, in the first heralding of the morning, when from afar and near a half-awake cock crew, she felt the silent pair move over the threshold and mount into the life of her everyday. When, by setting sun, she lifted her eyes from the folio because the writing dimmed and trembled, then her mother, garden-can in hand, was silently bending and rising between the garden beds, refreshing with thin sprays of water a wild tangle of many-coloured brilliant flowers crowding thick and high. When she came from the University and turned into the street she would meet her famed father at the door in his red robe as he turned the latch-ring. Young people, who accompanied him to the lecture, pulled at him, tried to help him to carry his books, disputed

silently who should have the honour. Thus they moved on talking, and if there were four, the narrow street was filled.

Ravegnana's mien was always calm although she was so very busy. Her real social intercourse by day and night was in her mind. Her life was just a flat attempt to mirror this intercourse; nothing else could give her joy. Yet no part of the personality is strong enough to reflect the fiery yet chilling nature of the mind. Everything in man melts, crumbles, rusts, darkens, as soon as the mind, the intellect, tries to take possession. She could not define all this; but that she knew it she showed, as does every richly endowed heart which has given itself to the unselfish service of others.

How had she grown thus? If someone had questioned her—yet nobody spoke, because the education of man at no time has been spiritual enough to allow us to take notice of the essential things of another's life—if someone had questioned her the answer would have been: "Well, was I not obliged to be thus?" But no one questioned. The world had its explanation as always. Her old father Porta—that was the beginning and end of the matter. Were not all the works of this deep and subtle thinker conceived in like strangeness, woven into this world's pattern and yet so defiant of it? A quiet old man creates out of his grey head a race of stormy demi-gods. With long steps they stalk into Bologna and have here their existence. And this daughter, only creation of Giacomo in flesh and blood, seemed to the people of Bologna to belong to the strong though rather remote world of the old man. Those who were acquainted with Ovid had said that a supplement must be added to the "Metamorphoses," *Supplemento Bolognese*: the famous Giacomo created his daughter himself, born out of the tangle of his brain, and one day in complete absent-mindedness torn forth with the pen behind his ear.

It was through the hands of this abstraction, this daughter, that day by day the life of Bologna ran. Murder, theft, adultery, robbery, manslaughter, perjury, trespass, libel, slander—every crookedness, every anguish which belongs to the unhappy life of man. Strangely she had to give herself up to these things in double character, in the law courts and in the lecture room. At one moment she fused her own soul with that of the criminal, watched him struggle for his miserable existence, one which, with shuddering, if it had been hers, she would have torn from her like foul rags. Then she turned her mind to the other side, crept into the ordinances of the republic and saw the struggle of the masses against the individuals, who, through stronger qualities, opposed

or endured them. The life of the masses had to go on, and for this she received bread and office. She had to defend a wild gloomy animal in chains against a less gloomy but far wilder one in freedom—the State against the individual. She had stood on both sides, herself dealt each wound and suffered the blow, and thus the experience was lifted into a higher atmosphere. Like a slain one fighting a battle in the far clouds, she went with her legal cases to lecture to academic youth, which became her chief work.

Once, after handling a dark case, a student came up to her at the end of the lecture and took the liberty of asking what she thought of the human side of it all. "The human side?" She leaned her arm full of books on the desk, her hand on her red mantle, to lift it up when she moved from the lectern.

"Yes," said the young man with hot eyes. Then he went on: "Look at it not from the legal side, but from the human side. From the womanly," he added to make his meaning clearer.

"The same as here, in this college. We are always human."

"Then the human side of Ravennana is inhumanly cold!" cried the student, beside himself and prejudiced in favour of her carnal beauty, kept under lock and key.

She went red. For good reasons. In spirit she answered him, "Friend, I am a higher kind of human being," and then felt double shame. Felt shame in the first place in a noble, but masculine way, that a woman should want to say that to him. Felt shame in the second place, chaster indeed, but stronger, that she should make her higher world so cheap even in her thoughts.

"There is something true in what you say," she replied to her student. "But you know," she went on discreetly, "our position is difficult. One would do better to listen to the apostle, '*taceat mulier in ecclesia.*' Generally at least." Then she finished—too sincere to go on.

In the evening, at the window, as she was binding carnations with bast, out of her heart mounted a prayer, erratic and beautiful; just as a meadow mixes the odour of its own moisture with that of the many growing flowers, and raises a sweet and strong scent towards the sky. Her prayer was, "Let me be human."

But at once the blood mounted into her cheeks and she smiled at her foolishness, which, indeed, as soon as she tried to understand it, she could not. She changed her prayer into, "Let me be beautiful." The root of the matter is, she thought, that I must realise what is essential in order

to become what I must become. May one pray thus? Yes, she thought, as the words "Give us this day our daily bread" came into her mind. Meanwhile, she had bound up the carnations.

One late afternoon, after she had been two years in office, she arrayed herself for an evening social gathering. She was standing in the room opening on to the flower beds. The curtains separated her from the glowing and sweet-scented garden. A yellow dress fell straight down to her feet, and the sleeves of it came down to her hands. From her brow and temples she had bound back her dark hair. Gazing into the looking-glass, the grey eyes of her father stared back at her with their habitual seriousness. Then the lips of her mother smiled in unison. The gentle fire stole over, and then the eyes laughed. She leaned on the chest which supported the looking-glass, smiled to herself, and regarded her dress. But nothing about her sparkled save her eyes. "Gioja," she thought. That means "Joy"—and also "Jewel." So she took a casket from the wardrobe cupboard and opened it. Green, blue and red it flamed under a sunbeam, shooting through it hair-thin. For some reason or other she put the coloured stones back into darkness and took from them a colourless beryl, which she put on her left hand. She took a veil out of the chest. As she was hanging it over her head she stood again before the mirror and looked at herself. She was beautiful, serious, but of happy aspect, twenty-six years old, in a yellow dress; a beryl, the magic protector of womanly honour, on her finger. Outside glowed the summer afternoon. She stood for a moment in the cool shadow; then went outside. "Give us to-day our daily bread," she said to her soul, pushed the mirror's picture of herself out of her mind, and locked the door behind her.



CHAPTER III

THE Lady of Laws went to the Villa Guarnieri. The evening sun already had lost the power of its heat. Many women, their babies at their breasts, stared at her. "To all their lot and place," she thought. She looked at the stone lions crouched on a corner-slab of the street, and thought again: "Each woman has her man and child. These town lions and I are integral parts of an entirety. An entirety? But what is it, this entirety?—this town, this congregation of merchants and hucksters, lawyers, soldiers; and then these women here, each one like the other? Is it worth while seating oneself proudly on the top of this pile, like a figure in escutcheon? No! But there is something else which makes my work worth while. It is the spirit of Bologna which heaves in this street, which rests on these hills." Happy, stormy, overpowering strength of thought! She loved the soul of Bologna, and as she in mind turned over the laws she had that day expounded, she came into the country. Hills covered with vines mounted on high; sycamores and oaks lined the high roads which led to them, and touched the fringes of the forest which covered the mountain to the left with a dark growth. On the right, sombre and beautiful, the park disappeared into the distance of the hills.

"Ave!" she said to the towers, hills and sky, and came to the garden. The festival was going forward like the beginning of a dream. Women were walking about on the paths. Out of the bushes stepped a young fellow with a parrot on his shoulder. Half man, half boy, he reached the bird an almond with his lips, and smiled like a young god of love at the Lady of Laws. Among the bushes someone sang to the music of the lute. Messer Guarnieri came and led her nearer the house, where, under the trees, on the stone prominence of the steps, in the open windows out of which tapestry was hanging, the assembly moved and swayed. The lamps gleamed on the pergola, and out of the bushes sang the sweet voice.

Mona Clarice, the wife of Lambertazzi, was there. This was specially noticed, for she rarely moved in society. For two years, since the birth of her son, she had been unwell. But it was almost opportune, for she was very domesticated, and phlegmatic in society. What could draw her into society? Nothing. But she had her husband, her house and child. Her husband indeed was generally not there. But she did not mind, he

existed, and he was hers. She had her boy. A hundred times she would say to him in the same tone of voice: "But Muzio!" She had a house, a bed behind curtains on which she could rest, a praying-desk at which to kneel, a tapestry to embroider. She had servants to scold and praise. She had the church to go to; in that she had distraction enough.

And Ravegnana mixed among the good women. The only one who had the prerogative to speak in public, she listened, sober-minded and serene. One of them chattered about servants, another about a family quarrel; here a reputation was torn to shreds, there a healing salve was praised; or one of them talked about her husband, and another followed on. But everybody was talking together. Each had her little household idols with her, her Hymen too, concealed indeed, but only lightly concealed; everybody by chance could see it. Even Mona Clarice lifted her wide eyelids and smiled uncertainly. After a time, just as there was a turn in the conversation, she cried: "Perhaps he will come after all!"

"It is queer," said one, as she sat down again. "'To-day begins your life,' said my mother to me the night before I went to church with Messer Donati. She might just as well have said, 'To-day it finishes,' because I remember how I was torn away from everything. I had got a husband, and didn't know how—was elevated over all my people, and became a mother; and how could I have a clear thought about anything, when it all went on the wings of the wind? And then one day I shall find I am old. My grandchildren will be grown up. And I, withered, shall die, and be put in the ground; and I shan't for the life of me be able to say how it all came about, save that Donati brought much of it upon me when he took me to church. You are well out of it, Madonna Olimpia." This last to the Lady of Laws. The speaker was a woman in a brown veil.

"Well out of it—well said, Madonna Erminia," cried another. "What a lot you could do if you were not bothered with Messer Donati."

The woman laughed. "What would you do?" asked the Lady of Laws.

"Madonna Olimpia, what else should I do save seek another husband? I should have time all day long, and still more at night. The devil must be in it if . . . Aren't there men enough?" The social circle repeated it, glanced at the Lady of Laws, and laughed. "Men enough," she said, "and women enough. Therefore everything is as it should be."

"But what about you?" asked the black-haired Maddalena, wife of the general, Sfiga. She leaned forward, her arms on her knees, the fine

movements of her elbow muscles showing through her silk sleeves. "Is a god going to come down from heaven for you?"

"Please leave me out of it," cried Ravegnana. "Life, my dears, issues from fullness. In whatever sphere men and women may move, the blessing of God is all-present with them."

The women, children of those wild times, looked at her and were still.

"God comfort us, my lady!" said Mona Maddalena. "Wherever you look there is only war, fire, murder, treachery, shame. There is certainly need to believe that the blessing of God is in all this. The blessing of God!" she cried wildly, wringing her hands and shaking her black-haired head; then letting it fall to one side. She was always trembling for her soldier-husband, the general, who was rarely at home.

Ravegnana was still. It was her profession to make a point clear—at least when she was in office. Otherwise she let the interchange of ideas have free play, let passion, and violence, and error of every kind voice themselves. She preferred not to interfere; and found this panicky way of discovering truth quite charming. Her soul was in love with beauty different from her own.

"Blessing? The blessing of God in this life," cried the wife of Sfiga, "where is it? where shall I look for it? Oh, if for a short time only I could find peace! Where is this blessing of God?" It was an imperious, hectoring cry, while the wind tossed up her dark hair and swung it silently against her temples.

Ravegnana stood up. "Where is it? In give and take, in plenty and insufficiency, in honour and shame, in life and death."

"And in crime?" cried the wife of Sfiga. "In dying before your time? And in fear, ah, in fear?"

"God's blessing, all of it."

Ravegnana led her towards the lighted house.

"To you, yes, to you," said the wife of Sfiga, holding her arm. "To you who go walking in the garden of knowledge—to be sure. What do you know about life, my lady? Once sink into it as deep as I, and for very terror you won't know where to put yourself."

"It is possible," said the Lady of Laws, and they walked to the table.

Some time after there was a movement of the wall tapestry on which was a picture of the Emperor Charlemagne, falcon on fist, riding with his paladins. It was lifted up, and Lambertazzi appeared. The host, a Gierimei, sprang up to welcome him. At this time of the republic the two

great parties of the Bolognese nobility, the Lambertazzi party and the Gierimei party, were associating in partial friendliness. Already Madalena had risen to meet Valerio Sfiga, who floundered through the tapestry flung back by Lambertazzi as he entered.

Lambertazzi greeted the assembly and sat down for a meal. He had been in the saddle since morning; after his bath he had come straight from home, and he was hungry.

Ravegnana, as a lady much respected and in high office, had a seat of honour at the table. The gentleman next her was the Rector Magnificus. She looked closely at Lambertazzi, whom she now saw in close proximity for the first time. The man was so hungry that he took no part in the conversation.

"Yes, look there," said the Rector, "look at his Almightyness. That he is determined to become the greatest man in Bologna is not to be doubted. We shall presently *feel* his greatness—in our bodies. Think of what I have said when that happens. And now we observe his Almightyness at close quarters. Can't you see that he is quite different from us?"

"Yes, one can see that," she answered.

"And how? It is in this: he does not find it necessary to adopt charm of manner. Don't you notice? The rest of us here are just animals, companionable animals."

"But he is the hungriest," said Ravegnana. "Do you ever see charm of manner where there is hunger and thirst?"

The Rector Magnificus, a lover of art and full of theories about it, lost himself in meditation; from which he emerged by remembering that in such and such a chapel there was a picture of the Fall, "in which," he said, "Eve bites the apple with such grace that you wish you were there to enjoy it with her. There you see that charm of manner can accompany inordinate desire. For Eve," he said, "must still remain the most ravenous among women."

"Yes, among women," she returned. "But pay attention. What sort of line is pleasanter to your eye and touch—the straight or the curved?"

"The curved," said he, "of course."

"Such a one then," continued the Lady of Laws, "is the main line of Eve, because it is taken from a rib; and therefore inordinate desire cannot be found in Eve, because inordinate desire makes straight for its goal. You speak truly when you say that Eve has charm, but I think, therefore, to her was not granted the straightforward desire of a man. There is nothing charming in it. Is the sirocco charming? Is

life in general charming? Is death charming? All these holy powers are flung upon the world. May the world look to it how they shall affect us—with or without charm. Eve—why shouldn't Eve be charming? In her is less inordinate desire, therefore less of God."

"You are right," he replied to these platonic thoughts. "And very graciously have you defended Lambertazzi, who is sitting over there devouring his *salsiccia*. Nevertheless, allow me to say that the rib from which you yourself were made must have been a very straight one."

They got up from the table. Lambertazzi went on eating all by himself. Guarnieri kept company with him, and Mona Clarice stayed on the other side.

Afterwards, in the garden, where they wandered under the full-leaved branches of the trees, and through the archways of espaliers from which clusters of early grapes hung sparkling and showing their colours under the rays of the lamps, Guarnieri introduced the Lady of Laws to Lambertazzi. She stood under a tree and listened to the singing and the lutes.

"Mona Olimpia," he said; and Lambertazzi inclined his head. "Ravegnana," he added.

"Hell and the devil!" cried Lambertazzi, and laughed. "The Lady of Laws? I knew your father. A remarkable man. But that's a poor compliment to you, who have put on the gown and climbed right into the academic senate." He looked at her with staring eyes, glittering with their own light and that of the lanterns. "So this really is the Lady of Laws? Allow me to look at you closely. You know, when I was a child I would run long miles to see a marvellous animal; and just recently, in the last campaign three days' journey from here, they brought me in a cart a new-born calf with two heads. Unluckily the animal died, just as we got it into the camp. Now I see standing alive before me, you, a woman, who judges or teaches—or does both."

The Lady of Laws remained calm and took his fiery glance with a stare from her grey eyes—two pools which the lightning smote, but where no storm was raging. Where in their depths the celestial fire ended it was difficult to say.

The host wished to interrupt him with some idle pleasantry.

"What's the matter with you?" cried the general. "Can't you see that this Bologna sibyl and I have something to say to one another?"

Guarnieri turned away.

"Well?" Lambertazzi gripped a garden chair, pulled it towards him,

and sat down. "I am tired, and there is no one in this assembly to make me forget it. Something more lively is necessary."

Ravegnana was still. Music encompassed the garden-ways, the darkness, herself—like another life. In the depths of her heart she was moved.

Lambertazzi waited. She was still. He yawned. "I am tired. With what, oh beautiful Lady of Laws, shall I make you open your mouth? Must I broach some criminal case to make you melt into speech?" He yawned again.

Ravegnana pointed to the shrubbery. "We will let the beautiful night speak. Without a word it streams over us in all its fullness, like a soul that would speak to another." She turned from him into the shadows.

Guarnieri soon came back. He had seen the Lady of Laws leave the garden path, and he feared that she or Lambertazzi, or both of them, might have been offended.

"Have you then conversed with her Eminence?" he asked.

"Not a bit of it," answered Lambertazzi. "Did not even Balaam's ass speak when she had been well thrashed? Now you are going to take me to the torch-dance. Mona Clarice, I presume, accompanies me. Who this evening is to accompany that pageant piece, her Eminence?"

Guarnieri was to do that himself.

"Indeed!" said Lambertazzi. Then see to it that you do something to break the teeth of her high-and-mighty loveliness. For instance, set her robe on fire, so that for once in her life she gets rid of her damned tranquillity."

"I pray you emphatically," said Guarnieri, "not to forget who her Eminence really is."

"Man alive, she does what she can to make me forget it," replied Lambertazzi as they joined the assembly. Then to himself: "But Nature is also there, and has given her breasts and a pair of thighs to remind me." Then the torch-dance began, and, although Lambertazzi was tired enough to fall over his own legs, he accompanied the sleepy Mona Clarice as he should do. It was a fine dance.

"But we must see it from the distance," said Ravegnana to her cavalier. "Then its true beauty will come out. We can't see the best when we remain in the midst of it."

"Are you saying what you really think?" asked Guarnieri. "Look how they are all enjoying themselves. See how happy is Mona Maddalena standing by Sfiga; see how Mona Clarice hangs on Lambertazzi! That's the real pleasure, the social side of everything."

"If you like," she said. "But I was just thinking, as a child when I read how they fought for Troy, my place was always on Mount Ida, where the gods were encamped. From there I looked down to the plain and into the turmoil. From there I saw Ilion in flames and wept, and to this day I know not if it was for sorrow or joy."

Suddenly everything stopped. A mighty burst of fire shot up. And nobody knew how it happened. Espaliers and dry hedges stood flaming. And behind them blazed a heap of lopped brushwood piled there by the gardeners. Cries of fear shrilled over the music. There was fire on every side. The company saw themselves being surrounded by a burning circle. It pressed nearer, came with raving speed towards the dancers. Everything was mixed up. Near Ravegnana the blaze bent sideways, hissing. Without a thought she sprang into it, then through the gap, and into the darkness; stumbled, fell, picked herself up, couldn't see her hand before her eyes, and stared blinded into the night. Her hair frizzled at the ends. She put her hand to it, burnt her fingers, and put out the flame.

There were mingled cries, crackling of branches, hissing of flames—but all behind her, and confused. As she ascended the hill she felt with her feet whether there was a path or no path.

The night air was cool, the heat and the smell of burning brands remained behind. The ground was damp, the scent of black earth rose up. The wild-growing bushes struck her face from each side as she mounted. Thicker and thicker they crowded together, and moist clusters pressed together in her way. Still higher—there was a creaking, a moaning, a roaring of the branches in the wind overhead.

Then laurel scent came from all sides, the laurel leaves pressed into her face. She fumbled forwards. Then she came up against something. She felt arms, breath, knees, great limbs. She was pressed backwards, gripped by her shoulders, bent back, flung down in the soft earth. She wanted to cry out, but a mouth came and married her cry to its pantings. She wanted to get up, but could not because of someone's weight upon her—it seemed to tower above her the size of a mountain. Then every clear perception of her existence disappeared in a furious sensation of universality, in which Heaven, Earth, and tossing laurel branches rolled over her mind and body.

How long the adventure lasted she did not know. It had its own peculiar existence. Nothing but the laurel branch which she saw swaying in the night wind above her bore any relation to her past consciousness. And between the leaves glittered the stars.

Finally, she came to herself. She was alone. When she lifted herself, heavy and bruised, the night winds seemed to wind a moist turban round her head. Slowly she descended the hill. She sat down often on the grass; on her fell the dew; she was wounded and dumb. The wood receded behind her. There below her, in the plain, lay the town flashing from its own lights—the stars above it. As soon as she looked into the distance and saw Bologna, her old life came back to her. All became clear. A cry rang through her soul—"Violated"; and she fell over a half-built wall where the main street began. As she stood leaning there, the tears went away from her eyes, and she looked over the town with dry lids. "What has happened to me is to be part of my life," was her thought. Thus, during the night, cracks come into the wall on which a great artist has put his fresco. But he embraces them into his new design, increases his design, grows in power in himself, becomes a master in a way that he had never dreamed.

She descended the hill, through the rustling night. The way grew more familiar, everything was levelled out. Then came the little street, then the house-door out of which Giacomo di Porta Ravegnana had often issued with his folio under his arm. Full starlight glittered on the gable-wall. She unlocked the door, lit a candle, and went up to the mirror. But she could not see her face, only laurels and stars. She took the beryl from her finger and looked down at it for a long time—astonished. Then she slept. The garden-fire beat through her dreams. Then came the climb-up through the darkness, the breathlessness, the fear, every crackle of the branches, finally the violation. But at the end she saw only laurels and stars.





CHAPTER IV



SOME time had elapsed since the fire at the garden festival, when the Rector, one afternoon, received a visit from the Lady of Laws. It was just before the lecture, beginning at three o'clock, that she had asked for an interview—in the garden of the old cloister, part of which was used as lecture rooms. Around this garden there ran a colonnade forming a quadrangle, and open towards the flower beds. Low one-storeyed buildings surrounded it. Here and there in the shadow of the colonnade a crooked old window, almost overgrown with wild vine and softly illumined by the verdant reflection of the garden beds, stood open. It was out of one of these windows that the Lady of Laws had leaned as the Rector came along the colonnade, engrossed in his book. "Very good," he had said. After the lecture he would await her Eminence. Wondering with renewed astonishment at the reason for the interview, he began to dwell upon the caprice of his friend Porta in surrendering his daughter to learning. He walked on thinking: "She withers in this atmosphere; to-day I recognise it for the first time."

A clock struck the hour, and shortly afterwards he saw her approaching through the columns. She was carrying books. Her sleeves and the lifted hems of her gown were full. Two students relieved her of the folios. She walked on empty-handed, and yet as if still under a burden.

He led her to a seat. She put her hands into her sleeves as cloister women do. It was the twilight hour, and everything in the room trembled and was dim. But the eyes and mouth of the Lady of Laws showed firm. She seemed to him never once to lower her eye-lids. Generally she did this less than others.

"Reverend sir," she began, "I should like to think that you have always been not only the protector of Ravegnana, but also the friend of Giacomo. Not that I would ask you to act as a father—Giacomo bequeathed to his daughter in mind and body his judgment on morality. But in the hour of trial one needs someone outside oneself in whom to repose one's respect and confidence."

"My child," he murmured, disquieted yet put at ease.

"Reverend sir," she began again, "I am resigning my office in this University, for I must."

"Why must you?"

"For the only reason that could compel me to do so."

Through the dim light she saw him smile. "Child," he said, "why so pale and immovable? Have you become a nun in your work with us that you hesitate to tell me what is ever a woman's most appropriate fate? Whom will you marry?"

Ravegnana had anticipated this misunderstanding, and with it the despair which takes hold of us when we think: "As it was with others, will it be with me?" She had already suffered everything in her soul, and, now that reality was upon her, she could steadfastly endure it.

"I am marrying no one," she said. "When I confide to you that I am in the condition of the Holy Virgin, do not think me blasphemous. There is nothing holy in my case. But this I have surely learnt: one's virginity may be taken by force, but not one's chastity." She turned her face to the window with a movement of exaltation, and, while the old man sat stupefied before her, she continued calm and contained: "I should have told no one, nor should I have considered my silence as hypocrisy, if I had intended retaining my office with all its dignities. The scandal that I shall cause is really the greater wrong. But what I should always have suffered as a secret wound in the soul, nature has now determined to reveal to the world. I turn my gaze to the kind hand that strikes me. Henceforth in all humility and quietness I pray to God, as I must, that my heart be laid bare before Him."

"Who was it?" he asked.

"Sir, I do not know. It was dark, and he was very strong."

After a long silence her dress rustled and she got up. "Forgive me that I had to so shock you. Treat the matter as your wisdom thinks best. As for me, I am chiefly sorry for the pain I cause you. May God teach me to keep my head above water. Henceforth there is no stability under my feet." She was leaving him. Confused, he called after her: "But—when? Where?"

"The night of the garden festival at Guarnieri's. I fled up the hill."

"My child," he said, "what is to happen?"

"God's will be done," she answered, as she felt his tears fall on her hands.

Ravegnana from now on kept herself in retirement. Aja shed secret tears for a few days when she learnt the facts of the matter. There was nothing to be said, the Lady of Laws asked advice of no one. The old woman's feelings of shame, anxiety and distress, melted into a feeling of

tenderness towards the child. Now and again Aja, in her anticipatory mood, would go to the linen box on the floor. She would open it, hunt and turn over the things and bring to light baby clothes. Once she came across a jettatura of red coral which she dangled in her fingers. It was the phallic token by which they were accustomed to swear. She was frightened and thought: "Who knows from what ruffianish reprobate this child comes!" The same day she consecrated several candles to the Mother of God. But her heart was still troubled, and she could not resist telling Ravegnana what she feared.

Ravegnana sat at the ground-floor window which opened on the garden. The red woollen curtain was drawn back. A book lay on her lap. She was looking in front of her, at a picture of the kindly Madonna presenting her Child for worship. At His feet lay scallop-shells and red berries.

"I have just lit another candle, the fifth to-day. But I am still disturbed," said the old woman. "What if a young bandit is to be born into the house of Ravegnana?"

Ravegnana's eyes remained fixed on the picture. In the jug on the window-sill a bunch of white flowers clustered round a few late roses. On her lap lay Augustine's "De Civitate Dei." Before her eyes stood the Mother and Child in all their serenity. "Leave that in God's hands," she said. "At least the child has a mother."

In her mind, however, it was otherwise. "The woman is right," she said to herself. "It is possible that a brigand or a murderer gave me the child. But a man is not born a robber and murderer. What he inherits may be the usual unruliness of a child, which may be directed towards good as well as evil. What we bring into the world is simply energy which cannot rest; it will and must consume itself. Man is born for that." Yet another thought occurred to her. When she recalled the adventure to her mind, she could associate it with no individual, there was nothing personal. More and more it all became an insoluble puzzle. It was like the night itself, flung over her with invisible limbs, an irresistible power. But she remembered clearly the waves of laurel scent which floated over her, and the light of the stars. Everything combined to leave the impression of a father who attracted rather than horrified. She thought of Leda, Io, Semele, and others loved by the gods. The more emphatically she made her choice, god or bandit, the more she exercised correction on her desires, and on her swift pensiveness and her fleeting joy. "One thing, at least, is certain," she thought,

"my child will need tighter reins than the child of a gentle union, one born under the law." So she conquered herself when she was beset with longing for a special kind of food, thinking: "There the bandit or the child of the gods stirs. Be quiet, little one, you must be a man." But one had said: "It is flesh and blood which speaks in the mother, she must yield." She did it, and thought: "There it comes to me again. Whatever must I do in all this mortal tangle? The poor little limbs of my child speak, but the Lady of Laws puts them on the school bench. I have always been like that. I have deserted the life of the body which comes to us so finely from the hand of God. Is this not also His noble gift, which He reaches to us of necessity? In order that I may be conscious of my complete being, He allows me to experience this." So she ate the green medlars so much desired. And she smiled, for it appeared to her life a sacrificial act, holy in some way.

At the University they gave out that she was ill. Was the matter to be hushed up? Would they merely suspend her from office, or fling her out in disgrace? Would they make an investigation? She did not know. When she had spoken with the Magnificus in the office-room she had left all in his hands.

She believed that everybody was talking about her. When she lay awake at night, fingers pointed to her out of the shadows. She lit a light, and picked up a book which lay conveniently to hand on the high stool. "Now the whole town sucks up the tale. But I must live it out," she said to herself. Then her continuous suffering deadened her senses; or it was that her own nature brought rest to her, because she had another life to bring to ripeness. At all events the nights changed. True, she felt more disturbance of mind than at the very beginning, but the aim of everything was clear to her.

"What is happening in the town?" she asked of her old serving-woman after a restless night. She sat in the window-place. The garden lay neglected before her eyes. It was scoured by the wind, which, caught between house and shrubbery wall, howled, and was still, and then rose again.

Aja came and went. What she had been able to gather from scattered gossip, much enlarged upon, was this: civil war was in the air—the old trouble. Since the last outbreak of war between the nobles, years had flown by. At first there had been a time of timid relaxation—reaction from the dreadful bloodshed which had splashed every street. Then the form of government had changed, as was the case at this

time in the whole of the Romagna. They got together a more or less non-party democratic government in which scholars and craftsmen gave themselves airs. But the nobles could see plainly where they were. After a time, in spite of everything, they brought the Lambertazzi family back from banishment, the nobles swore to keep the peace, and for a time all went well, so that an intelligent man could again exist in Bologna without the State continually questioning him as to his most innocent movements. "When we can say this about the State, my children," declared Giacomo di Porta to Ravegnana, "everything is well." Then came the years of foreign wars. The times again changed and smiled beckoningly on the nobles. So they bestirred themselves.

Very soon, as the citizen force could not be kept continually under arms, it had more and more to be fed with mercenaries. Thus the nobles regained their power. Further years of war followed, but fortunate for the town. More and more did the army leaders, who were nobles, institute martial laws, which one after another took political colour. The houses of Lambertazzi and Gierimei were the most prominent. That of Bentivoglio Enzios, of bastard race, was at that time in the third place. So long as the power of the Bolognese nobles worked abroad all was well, but with the conclusion of the peace negotiations this power was flung upon the life of the citizens. At once the question of aristocratic rule was on every lip, and again the sullen spirit of feud was in the town. The parties made cautious overtures to one another, and their relations affected the citizens with whom they had intermarried. People waited for the turn of events, but of what nature these might be none could tell. First Lambertazzi made a charge against the Government, an effective initial move which committed him to nothing. This concerned certain irregularities which, during the campaign, could not be circumvented. But no one seriously believed that out of this the *coup d'état* could issue; and Lambertazzi betrayed no lust for power, although he had not yet disbanded the army. Indeed, this anxiety, so critical at a first glance, disappeared when one looked closer. At Lambertazzi's side throughout the last campaign had stood Sfiga, who sprang from the house of Gierimei. He came from a side issue, but was born in wedlock, a matter which, considering the times, requires mention; and, because the family through death and misfortune had declined, he was the most important representative. He was Lambertazzi's equal in position, and, as son of the sister of the old childless Galeazzo Gierimei, he inherited his fortune. To both, during the wars, the town had granted equal

rights of command. In this way neither could make his house more powerful than the other. Like jealous consuls they were set side by side to inspect one another. A *coup d'état* emanating from the two in union seemed so unnatural that the town did not fear it—its history for fifty years had been the struggle for supremacy of the Gierimei and Lambertazzi houses. From the time of the republic there had been peace between them; for war offered fewer prospects. The two contemporary representatives, during the campaign, had good relationships with one another; in the town people spoke joyfully of the comradeship and credited themselves with it as a guarantee of peace.

The Lady of Laws wanted to throw herself into the excitement, but remained inactive; first of all because she was a woman, secondly, because of her shame. Her old father, Porta, had been on the side of Lambertazzi before the time of the republic. Her family had always supported this Ghibelline party. "They can rule," he said. "Egoistic, are they? and cruel? and unworthy? If you like; but everybody is like that. The family can rule; it is in their blood. I have my shoes made by the cobbler who best understands his job," and so on. He stood for Lambertazzi.

His daughter felt that she must do something. She began with a record in writing, a political tract. When she was half-way through she thought: "I am writing this for no purpose—only to please myself. Who wants it?" Then she decided to make herself busy about the silent house. So she occupied herself with books, pictures, flowers, sewing; often without thinking.

One day, in the afternoon, while she was sewing, there came distant sounds of unrest. When she looked out she saw everybody rushing along in one direction. Hands were stretched out, heads bent back. Mouths cried, "Quick, quick, quick!"

"It is beginning," she thought and went from the window, her heart beating like a far-away hammer. She wanted to go to the door, saw her maternal figure in a mirror as she came through the room, then picked up her red doctor's robe, which was conveniently to hand, flung it round her and went out into the daily life of the town, into the life of Bologna.

Fathers of families stumbled down the stone steps jutting on the street. They were unbuckling their sword girdles, which had become too tight since the nobles carried on the town feud with mercenary troops. Women wrung their hands and flung their arms round their

husbands' necks, children at their skirts cried in long-drawn-out plaintive tones, "*Padre mi-ol*"

Insurrection of the mercenary troops! That was what Ravegnana made out of the street broil. Why? They said their pay was owing, they wanted to be discharged two months before their time. And nobody was there to prove their claim. They would not move off; no, they would not move off. "These locusts will rather fall upon us and let Bologna be devoured to the last bit of stubble."

"But Lambertazzi? Isn't this his affair? Lambertazzi? For what reason is he paid so high? But hear—he has got out of it again. Yesterday he had to go hurriedly at midday towards Faenza to a political conference. So we were informed. It must be true, otherwise this trouble wouldn't have come down upon us. He could soon put an end to it. But who knows who in all God-damned stupidity has mishandled his affairs now. At such a time! Oimè, a spark! Soon everything will be in a blaze."

The mercenary troops? "Good!" thought Ravegnana. "So the trouble is not of the town, and there will be no civil war." Of party quarrel, indeed, she noticed nothing. They were just law-abiding people united in kindly citizenship, yet perspiring in great fear and haste. Between them went the students, many Germans among them, who with characteristic delight in world history drew parallels in which figured Cæsar, Brutus, and the Capitol. The mercenary troops? "It is incomprehensible," thought Ravegnana, "why Lambertazzi has not attended to such a vital matter, leaving it without instructions, or with incomplete ones. But Sfiga must know about this."

Everybody was on the way to him. Ravegnana came in sight of his house. Here was already assembled a huge crowd, the flags of the mercenaries fluttering over the turmoil. Since she knew the house and its approaches from a visit she had once made to Mona Maddalena, she turned to the right by a side way, crossed over an adjacent piece of ground, climbed the hill covered to the height of a man with vines, and discovered a narrow vintner's path which descended again till she came over a little bridge pointing the approach of the villa. She went in by a back door. The servants crossing themselves were huddling off out of the kitchen. The cries at the bottom of the hill seemed to increase.

A row of rooms was empty. She turned a corner; three rooms lay before her, the door of the last standing open. It looked out on the screened top of the steps descending sideways from the house. Here was Sfiga, his wife hanging round his neck. He wanted to descend the

steps; but Ravegnana prevented him—she didn't know why. "Messer, are you going out to them?" she said.

He looked at her in a way which showed that he had no time to wonder at her presence. "There's no other course open to me," he said. "Against madness two things may be tried. Force or reason. The one I have not. Therefore I try the other." With this he tore himself away from his wife, and went.

Dumbly she wanted to fling herself after Sfiga, who descended and took up his position. The crowd yelled below. Ravegnana could not see the people, but in two strides she was by the side of the wife, and pulled her from the door. "Be quiet," she said. "He is talking to them now, and all may turn out well."

"Turn out well? No money is left, and what can he say to these devils?" cried the woman, grinding her teeth. "It has come at last. It is on us now. I knew all my life it would come."

Ravegnana held her fast. Sfiga was speaking, but the two women could not understand a word, and he did not get far in his speech. A great roaring and bellowing suddenly rose up. Was it of madness? Or of contempt? At any rate, although she was trembling with terror, Ravegnana noticed that there was no clear ring in it. Now there was a rattling against the walls; a hail of stones flew up against Sfiga and beyond him into the house. They struck him down.

Now there was no restraining his wife; the next moment she was outside, and flung herself over him to protect him with her body. Ravegnana saw this noble foolishness, and saw clearly how desperate it was. Here and there laughter rose from the crowd; but before the tumult had time to shape itself to any purpose she was out of the door, unexpectedly standing before the people in her scholar's red robe. Before the momentary stillness could give birth to any new terror her whole will surged into her eyes and with radiating glance she fixed each person prepared to interfere. Making short restrained gestures, as if she were in the college rostrum, she raised her hand, went one pace towards the first stone step and spoke—not vehemently, yet with emphasis.

"Soldiers, fellow-citizens, it is high time to stop this misery; but we can look at it together: there is still time; give heaven thanks! Money and authority are at hand. I stand here to tell you, but you clamour for them at the wrong place. Lambertazzi has left nothing here. What do you want with Sfiga? The authority is with the Republic. It stands before you here in my person and tells you to go to the Burgher-House. Lift not

your hands against yourselves. Why should you? Who will defend the streets and squares, if not you? Children, what has led you against the Republic? You shall be appeased; is not right on your side? Where are your leaders? Bring your banner here. Up with it. It has been to us the sign of justice and honour for so long, and never in vain. It must remain honoured. All good men know that. Right will not suffer violence." She waited, her glance probing the crowd, then saw that its mood was already so far influenced by her appeal to reason that she could count on a few supporters.

"Students!" she cried. "Make way, people, that we bring order into this chaos, and soon. Make way here in the middle, up to the steps."

Students came forward through the turmoil, more and more of them, till the whole University seemed to be standing before her making a passage, giving some sort of form and order to the crush. She saw her own students standing there, looking at her as if very pleased to be given a definite rôle in the drama that was taking place. Knowing that a threatening crowd must be occupied, dividedly occupied, before new murmurings could arise, she continued: "You, Geronimo"—he was standing half-way up the steps—"take the deputies of the mercenaries and get you to the Magnificus; and we must get the Senate to the Burgher-House. And you, Sebastian, go there at once, to the Podesta and to the treasurer. In an hour——" she turned to the crowd whose banner bent nearer, "in an hour there will be negotiations and first payments. Where are your deputies? Will you accompany them to the Senate? But first of all arrange who will represent you in your absence. Keep discipline so that the town will not demand indemnification from you."

Here it struck her that she must keep silence about Sfiga. "The scholars of Bologna, as you see, take your affair into their hands. This town is called a town of Learning, is it not? Well, all that means nothing if it possess not Right and Wisdom. Peace be with us."

A leader came forward. He said that absolutely nothing could be said against her words, and that he was quite content to have the banner brought to her. In the meantime it had done good work.

It had been held by a mighty fellow in a breastplate; it stood near Ravegnana and trailed itself over the steps. "Now the matter is with you," she said to the leader. "Who are you? Quartermaster? No, you must be captain. I propose this: you divide the crowd into three parts. The biggest takes the main street, the other division the high road to the right. And

on the left the smallest strikes across the fields behind the houses. But first of all make way for me that I may get through into the town by the right, and with all possible haste to the Burgher-House. I pray you, give me a safe way, sir," she said, looking at him with steadfast gaze. "You see my condition."

This man called to him six seconds-in-command, and the crowd, after some pushing and short noisy words mingled with shrill whistles, was brought to quiet. Ravegnana stood on the steps, and saw how the chaos began to take upon itself a certain amount of order. Here and there it formed into firm groups, the highway showing dimly between them. Formations could be seen, each with a sort of middle point. Here was the banner, in another place some other field emblem on a long pole, or an upright lance from which a coloured pennon fluttered. After she had made careful observation of everything, she turned to Sfiga, and found time to indulge her horror over his blood and the swift fate that had befallen him.

His voice still rang in her ears: "There's no other course open to me." And now he lay there.

"A way has been made for you, Madonna," murmured the leader between her thoughts. She asked herself what would become of all this pile of misfortune lying at her feet.

Then, turning to the leader, she said: "Give me a signal."

He whistled, and everything was still. "Come to me, students," said Ravegnana. "I must take Messer into the town.—That was a stupid thing to do," she said to the leader. "Believe me, you fell upon the wrong man."

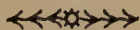
The leader lowered his gaze, shrugged his shoulders, and bowed to Maddalena. He tried to raise her with encouraging words. But he did not succeed. Ravegnana sent two students into the house for a stretcher. They tore away the flat top of a table standing in the first room, sought and found a cloth, and returned. Then Sfiga was lifted out of a pool of blood; but whether he was dead or alive she knew not. She flung the cloth over him and helped Maddalena to her feet, saying, "Control yourself, my dear; otherwise we shall lose our lives. The worst is to come." The worst—the moment they should descend, when she would no longer be able to hold the crowd with her gaze. She drew Maddalena's veil over her ruffled hair, and then over her distracted face. The students begged that they might accompany and protect the woman. But Ravegnana wanted to keep a grip on this despairing wife herself, the bier at her side, the crowd under her eyes. Now the

bearers were descending the steps. She wanted to pray to God, to put the matter into His hands, when suddenly the banner of the mercenary forced itself upon her gaze. With a commanding gesture she brought the man to her side, and under the protection of the banner she went through the crowd. Now that she was among them they were no longer fixed by her gaze. A hundred paces away and the road turned. Bushes and foliage mounted on high, then closed behind her.

Thus they came out of the danger zone. Suddenly it seemed to Ravegnana that she again heard the bellowing, but now behind her. She remembered the peculiar expression on the leader's face. A pre-arranged affair? She wondered. Meanwhile, in the space between two buildings where the open country again spread before her she saw smoke and fire ascending from Sfiga's house. But the mercenaries were withdrawing and were going to the Burgher-House. A section of the mob had broken away and was pillaging. Or——

"Perhaps," thought Ravegnana, "this is the order of a higher authority, the same which pushed Sfiga out of the game."

But her own house was near. The students went more swiftly. Sfiga, on his litter, breathed heavily, for the movement shook him, and blood gushed from his mouth. The plank was put down. Ravegnana commanded: "Take him in." His wife took hold also; but as she did it they could not prevent her from seeing her house blazing in the distance. Ravegnana, moved with pity, flung her arms around her, but Maddalena saw the flames unconcerned, and fixed her attention only on her husband. Ravegnana gave further instructions, then washed her face and hands, and brushed from her mantle the dust of the turmoil. She looked in the mirror. Her face was thin, it seemed chiefly eyes and mouth. "My body looks strange," she thought, "but my face is more like me than ever." Down below there was some bustle—the physician had come. "Now I must go to the Burgher-House," she thought. "I must not relinquish this matter until I see it in as strong a hand as my own."



CHAPTER V

NEITHER the government nor even a deputation of the University Senate could be brought together. The emergency meeting declared themselves the competent authority, while the mercenaries invested the Burgher-House.

Ravegnana demanded a hearing. "I have committed you, but the moment was critical and everything depended on it. I was obliged to take up a definite attitude and agree, otherwise we should have had the streets raging with soldier creditors, and tomorrow probably civil war. They must be paid at once, for I hear that two months' arrears are due to them. Lambertazzi has had control all these years. Now he is away for a while—who has authority to act for him?"

"Sfiga has," was the answer. "Who else?"

"No. He has neither power nor money. His house is burnt down and he has been stoned."

"Very regrettable," said the treasurer, "but no affair of ours. What do you really want, Domina? I should be greatly obliged if you would speak plainly. Do you suggest that we should pay? Well, I tell you now, so long as I am responsible for the town finances, or, for that matter, any other reasonably sane individual has control, there will be no paying out twice any sum that has already been accounted for. Leave the nobility to pluck out each other's tail-feathers if they will, lady. They are a degenerate lot, and the sooner they die out the better."

"One minute's hesitation," said the Lady of Laws, "and Sfiga would have been lynched."

"Splendid," said the treasurer. "Then there would have been one Romagnole fighting-cock the less."

"What am I to say to all this? Sfiga was in the field the whole of the war years, fighting for us, helping us to regain the supremacy which is Bologna's due. I should have thought that a citizen government would have been grateful to any man for that, even if he is a noble, which for the past two hundred years in Italy it has not been an unmixed pleasure to be. I see, however, that you think otherwise. Very well then! I appeal to you for the other reason. If you do not remedy the evil, the mercenaries will plunder."

"But what account, think you, should be charged with this colossal debt?" he asked.

"How should I know that!" she replied.

"You seem to think, Domina, that I ought to know. Perhaps one of these augurs can tell us," he said, turning to the bench of Sapientes. "Is there anyone else here who can manage the town business with moral philosophy?"

"Ravegnana," declared the Rector, "will have prevented Lambertazzi's entry here as pacifying dictator, if we are successful in quelling this rising. Now, gentlemen, to be *encumbered* with a peace-maker is a serious matter. Do none of you worthy fathers of the city realise the tyranny of the nobles over us? What are you here for if not to preserve us from political troubles?"

"And what are you here for?" shouted the treasurer. "To squander our hard-earned money, spongers that you are, the lot of you."

The whole bench of academicals were up in arms against him as he went on:

"Shall I tell you with how much deficit we closed up our accounts last year with your damned expensive foreign professors? Shall I tell you that?"

"The University," said the Rector heatedly, "is Bologna's greatest honour. Holy Peter! without it there would be precious little of importance to talk about here. *Mi basta!* We must expect our honours to cost us something."

"Cost us something—excellent! That's all you can do for us." The treasurer fumbled amongst innumerable papers, his pale fingers moving rapidly from sheet to sheet.

"Gentlemen," said Ravegnana, "Lambertazzi will not be long."

"Whether he comes or not this learned impotence with its meddlesome know-all twaddle is becoming intolerable to any man of sense."

"I say the same," said the Rector, "of the short-sightedness, the close-fistedness and helpless stupidity of the Republican Government." He had risen, and it could be seen that beneath his fur coat he was trembling violently. His eyes, red-veined, stood out from his parchment-pale face.

"Gentlemen, Lambertazzi will not be long," said Ravegnana. "How pleased he will be to find a desolate embarrassed town, so that with one pull at his purse strings and one word to his mercenaries he, unaided, can restore peace! A word, I think, which may mean the end of civic freedom, and a peace as of the grave."

"Now to business," said the Podesta. "It is either too late or too early to alter this business now. However, dear Madonna, do you suppose that our folk are the folk of the civil war of '74? Republic or Dukedom?—the question will appear to them of much less importance than you are inclined to think. And of the peace of the grave you will not see a great deal. But where—and this is the matter of present importance—are we to find the money meanwhile? You have not considered that, Madonna. The treasurer is right: the University last semester swallowed up enormous sums. And now you go and pledge our word entirely of your own authority! That's a woman's move. What have you to say to it?"

"I admit it. But, heaven help me, it was necessary."

"What!—when the town treasurer refuses—you go and promise?"

She looked at him for a while, and thought of Giacomo di Porta, then of the unnamed child beneath her heart, the worthy past and the doubtful future of the house of Ravegnana, and gave reply: "I will redeem my promise with everything I possess."

"A lot that would help us," snapped the treasurer, laughing at her with a jerk of the head which reminded her of the peck of a bird.

"That's all I have to say," she concluded, a little embarrassed, for looking at the matter as a whole she knew that the treasurer was right. She felt that her passionate impulse was not quite like her. Yet she knew that if she were confronted with the same decision again she would be incapable of acting otherwise.

"O Madonna, you have rushed us into this," groaned the treasurer, thrusting his hands through his long grey hair. "We will pay, what else can we do? But we shall not fail to follow your generous proposal—we shall empty your pockets also. And seeing that this will not go very far, we shall have much pleasure in emptying those of old Gierimei at the same time—provided, of course, he sets so much value on Sfiga's bones, which I doubt."

Ravegnana, nervous and with a troubled conscience, went to the treasurer and offered to assist. The Rector watched her as he subsided. A remarkable woman, this daughter of old Porta! He thought of her as she was leaving his office that other evening in the twilight. He had always wanted to write or speak to her, but, bewildered as he was, he had never done so. Rumours had gone abroad, and what had he said? Nothing. Neither yes nor no. Strictly speaking he ought to have set up an enquiry at once, but he had shrunk from it, postponed it. Meanwhile rumours had swollen to an alarming extent. He was ashamed for her,

for her sex, for the University which was disgraced. He had shunned her as a subject of conversation, and latterly as a subject of thought. Then, just as the funeral notes seemed to be dying away over her grave, she suddenly stands before the whole people! In the most critical hour of the Republic it was evident that the slackened reins were in her hands. She moved through the streets and amongst the Council with such natural assurance that people forgot to cast aspersions upon her virtue.

"She has deceived our very eyes," thought the Rector. "But how? Her shame is too obvious even beneath her doctor's red hood."

The night drew on. Appointed troops camped round fires in front of the Burgher-House, while guards, consisting of soldiers and armed civilians, patrolled the streets. The only outrage was the one against Sfiga and his home. A few plunderers were seized, the town rabble was shaken, and the soldiers went away unconcerned, comforted with the prospect of Lambertazzi's return.

Towards morning there were signs of movement in front of the Burgher-House. The smoke of the fire lost itself in the cool grey of approaching dawn. The troops shivered drowsily and began to stir. Ravegnana stood near the treasurer and calculated, though in subdued tones. Suddenly Lambertazzi entered the room, accompanied by two torch-bearers.

"What is happening here?"

The bearers extinguished the torches against the marble floor, and planted themselves on either side of the door.

The Podesta, the town officials, the Rector and his Sapientes sprang to their feet in a body, although on one point their decision had been unanimous only a few minutes before (in contrast to more essential matters upon which they never could agree)—to remain seated, and pay no regard to him when he came.

The morning air crept in from the cold hall as he entered. The place suddenly seemed to reek of iron, leather, sweat and decision. There was a general feeling that the hour of fate had struck.

"What is happening?"

The Podesta, spluttering something about incomprehensible arrears of pay and a narrowly averted rising, lost no time in asking: "What has Lambertazzi to say?"

"Nothing. Did I not leave Sfiga behind with you? A Gierimei, a perfect specimen, too?"

"Yes. But——"

"Devil take you. But what? Call him to account for his own work. However, it is *incipit lamentatio Jeremiae* now. Eh?"

He laughed, cleared his throat, and pulled away one of the senators' chairs. Stiff from riding, he stretched out his legs and yawned. His leather riding-boots creaked from hip to heel.

"Sit down, Podesta, don't shake before me like a jackanapes." He cast his eyes along the whole row of them and surveyed them one after the other. "Ah, che vedo?" he cried, slapping his thigh as he saw Ravegnana. "So you've set up a matriarchy in Bologna in my absence? It gives me satisfaction to observe that you, too, desire a change of government. Patience, we will speak of that later. First, bring Sfiga here."

"Messer Sfiga—," stammered the Podesta with concern. But Ravegnana had already thrust back the bills into the hands of the treasurer and stepped forward. "Podesta, I alone have been eye-witness to what has happened. Allow me to speak for Messer Sfiga. The situation is such that it demands no explanation to this man from anyone. But the town will require a very necessary explanation from you, Messer. You know better than any of us what has happened. You knew it before us."

Lambertazzi laughed.

"What does the woman want?"

"To bring to your door the breach of the peace and the blood that has flowed—flowed let me add, through cowardice and very cunning treachery."

"Ravegnana," implored the Rector, drawing her back in concern for her protection. He had jumped up in dismay. She felt him tremble. "Ravegnana, dear child, come here, don't get yourself into trouble. Are you mad? What does the Gierimei house matter to you?"

"Leave her alone, if she feels like that," said Lambertazzi, looking at her out of his deep-set eyes. "But how is it, Madonna, that you pour all this over *my* head? 'Breach of the peace?' I remember very clearly, Ravegnana, my lessons with your father. He had many delightful things to say on that subject. He even told us what Justinian himself thought about it, as well as what is the penalty according to Roman law to-day—if one can lay hands on the offender, of course. That sort of stuff is quite good to listen to. And it is most instructive. But why, as I said, all this on my head? And why not on the head of Sfiga, who in my absence, as you will admit, was the next in command? Did you sermonise him in similar academic language?"

While he spoke, questioning her nonchalantly with his hands in his

hose, she knew that his heart was beating violently. She saw that his eyelids trembled.

"If only you took less trouble with your words, they would be plainer," cried Ravegnana. "Distort and cover as you like, but I know your thoughts; though unexpressed, I hear them crying aloud, accusing you." On this most of the senators sprang up and pressed round her. They wanted to hide her from the man with their mantles. He had been taking careful observation of her the whole time. Her face was as white as wax, a strange smile on it.

"Let her go on," said Lambertazzi. "I must say that all this is very interesting, even if it is not very useful. Yes, Ravegnana, to stick to the point, or rather to come to it at last—how has it happened that I see you here? I don't mean because you're a woman. That is all the same to me. The last leaps of a citizen government may be somewhat adventurous. I mean: why do you stand here before me instead of Sfiga? As I know him, he is certainly not the man to speak in the oracular way you do. Oh, I am sure of that! I should know where I was with him. May I take the liberty of asking you where he has got to?"

"At last," she replied, "we really know what has been troubling your insatiable heart the whole time. Has no messenger come to you? You don't know how your game ended? You don't know why your comrade whom you have betrayed is not here to answer you? You shall hear, man, what you are burning to know. Sfiga will not lead the troops against you, nor against us, whatever were his intentions. It may be that even as I speak to you he answers the Higher Judge."

"Indeed," said Lambertazzi, and suddenly stood up. "It's the first time that a Gierimei has seen a thing through. Now for the troops." He turned to the assembly. "Sit down," he called to the treasurer, "and stop this plunder. Presently things should go forward on a bigger scale. Don't bother to pay out your hide and leather pennies. Good-night, Ravegnana," and he moved forward, seeking to torment her with a look from his deep-set eyes. "Take refreshment. Renew your strength. One never knows for what it may be needed. Good-night. You see, we are now at an end with feelings. You are, therefore, no longer necessary. We are coming to realities. So are you, Ravegnana. Good-night."

When she reached home the stairway lay in the pale shimmer of dawn. In the bay-window grew a plant whose strangely twisted flowers stared at the first grey light. It was too dim to see their colours.

Ravegnana was not herself. For a long time she had lived so strenuously and through so much. But her heart took comfort from the plant, for it had no self-consciousness—was sleeping life.

"But as for me," she thought, "have I not been conscious of myself, reining myself, all this day and night? When you were only slumber, lovely flower, I was only action. Yet what does the striver really know? Sleep on, fair plant. We both circle very far from that sensitiveness where we can each completely know ourselves."

The physician came out of the room and brought her to Sfiga, who was asking for her. She went into the room; it was the one in which her old father, a supporter of the Lambertazzi house, had died. Here was his couch, the narrow trestle. To-day a Gierimei lay on it. His wife sat at his feet, her arms folded over the wooden bedstead. All was still; from the table the candle threw its dim beams across the room. Only on the crucifix and white-washed wall did the light show full. Ravegnana, as she approached Sfiga, remembered the night on which her father had died. Sfiga was in a dreadful condition. In spite of the bandages, he had steadily lost blood, and was as white as the linen.

"Ravegnana, I have . . ." he said, and stopped. The physician continued for him: "He has sent one of your servants to other members of the Gierimei party, but nobody comes."

"Is he back?" asked Sfiga.

"Yes."

Maddalena lifted her despairing face to the light.

"All was still. Sfiga pulled himself together and said: "Madonna, how is it with you? I hear that you came to our assistance. Now we are in your house. That means danger for you."

"Don't trouble," she answered, bending low to hear the broken words. "We will speak more to-morrow."

"No, don't go. Stay here. Something must be done."

Maddalena threw her arms round him, shook her black hair in his face, and yammered to him not to speak.

"Who else will trouble themselves?" said Sfiga. "If you have anything to say, say it, if not, be quiet! I want to speak of my children," he went on after a while, in a gasping voice. "The girl is with the Grey Nuns in Faenza. She is safe there. But my sons."

"Where are they?"

"My brother-in-law, of the Filippeschi, has them both at Orvieto. I am absent too often; they must be brought up by a man, one who is strong,

otherwise it is no use. Lambertazzi knows where they are," he cried out. He snatched at her dress, and kissed it.

"I have sent to Galeazzo, to Bentivoglio," he said, precipitating his words. "I have sent to Guarnieri, during the night, twice, thrice. Wife—where are the Gierimei? We see nothing of them. Has not one of them ears? Not one of them hands? The children must not stay in yon town."

"What are we to do?" Ravegnana said. "What about sending them to the Benedictines in Poggio near Florence? A kinsman of mine is *præfectus chori* there—I will take the matter in hand." As she spoke, he answered her with a burning glance.

The physician beckoned her to go.

"But, Ravegnana," pressed Sfiga, holding her by her dress, "your servants are known. No one can move if Lambertazzi decides."

She thought a moment, and then said: "I will try with a student—a foreign student, I think. A German is the best kind of man for such a task: faithful and a bit crazy—moreover unsuspected. I know pupils who were devoted to me while I was at the University. They were not afraid of the troops yesterday. I know the one, a good young fellow he is, who comes from Swabia, as one can see at once from his great limbs. He brought you here yesterday, and would gladly have done more. We can trust your children to him. As soon as it is day we will send for him."

"Your Eminence must say no more," replied the physician.

But as she was about to go, Maddalena, tottering, moved two steps and fell down before her.

"For whom are you doing all this, Law-Lady?" she said to Ravegnana between her sobs. "As sure as I am lying here at your feet I did not leave a good hair on your head when everybody was gossiping about you. I tore your reputation to shreds. And how Sfiga laughed when he returned and heard it!"

"That was the only thing to do at the moment," said Sfiga, weak and furious. "Have you got too much roof over your head?"

She looked anxiously at the Lady of Laws. "On whom is all your pity, Ravegnana? But do not leave us, do not leave us!"

Her words made Sfiga feel still more uncomfortable. If he had had strength enough he would have pulled the woman from her knees, and flung her out of the door. His looks said: "Damned idiocy!"

"Stand up, child," said Ravegnana. "I know. I am bird-free before you all. I have nothing to gain or lose. It's bad, I admit. When I was first

forced into the mud I thought to myself that I'd never get through. But now that I am so deep I feel I'm in God's hands. Shame, misfortune, believe me, are really nothing. Walk before God and joy will flow from you into the world, just as you feel the fraternal pulse of joy speaking to you out of the world. With God all life is a dance. Now, go and lie down. Sleep. Weep no more. Think of your husband. He is not helped with tears."

"The saints know all that," he said. "Bring her to her senses, Madonna—the best thing you can do. A marvellous wife for a sick man! Oh, merciful Jesus—to have to endure all this!"

He turned his face to the wall. Ravegnana left them. The physician came out with her.

"Well?" she asked outside.

"Your Eminence, I can do no more than rely on his virile Bolognese nature. We say that when Death closes his jaws on these people they knock one of his teeth out, creep through the hole, and go their way. So you can hope for the best. Yet as things are now there's not much hope of a cure. The chief trouble is with his wife—I can't cure *her* out of his way. Before you can count two she has flung herself across him three times, and in between has given herself over to so much idiocy, wringing her hands and such like lamentation nonsense, that I can't help wishing for the good of Sfiga that Lambertazzi during the next few weeks would arrest her. Yes, it's as bad as that. Now as concerns yourself, Madonna—how have you got through this unprecedented day, and through the night?"

"I hardly know. As if on eagle's wings."

"He didn't say too much anyhow," went on the physician. "You are running yourself into danger. . . . Everyone in the town can see that it is a *coup d'état*. Everything's plain. Lambertazzi has the army, has the Pretorian Guards inside our walls, has the strong party behind him, has luck, has impudence. What he hasn't got is a conscience to worry him. And our democrats, Madonna, soon begin to hiccough from their endless regulations; and then they go treading on one another's tails. Nothing gets more on its own nerves than a ruling democracy. In a few hours we shall have Lambertazzi rule. Whatever this man does, he does thoroughly. So what about your position with a Gierimei in your house, a man who doesn't in the least concern you? What will you do?"

"I don't know," she answered and looked at him. There was silence—

a silence of despondency. Then she went on: "Come and see him once again, master. Tell us what must be done. Then leave us if you think your visits will mean danger to you."

"I think they will, dear Madonna; I have a wife and children. But once again I ask you—what will *you* do? You have two lives to look after; just think."

"I don't know what I shall do. . . . You have just heard for yourself that no Gierimei will help him. His house is burnt to the ground. His pitiful condition of body you know better than I. Do you want to turn him into the street?"

"God knows that the case calls for charity. But woe to him who shows it! I ask you for the third time, and with dread, what is going to happen?"

"I don't know. The day will reveal it. Was not Elijah in the wilderness fed with bread from Heaven, and only for one day at a time?"

He shook his head. "Is that all your wisdom can help you now that things are going so hard with you? And yet you were in the academic chair, and the cleverest woman in Bologna."

Meanwhile Lambertazzi, who in the morning had assembled the whole Council, was at home dressing himself. He had passed a sleepless night, but was already refreshed with a bath. Mona Clarice, who had thrown back the bed-curtains, lay with her face towards him. She was playing with the tassels, and talked to him or to herself, or to neither.

She was a very inviting woman. Her night-dress was hemmed with a wine-red silk border; and she kept unnecessarily pulling it over her round breasts. With her head on her arm she chattered and surveyed the whole of the yesterday. Her husband, busy with his dressing, heard it all as a rustling in his ears. Her way of tugging the lace round her wrists made a deeper impression than her words.

"What?" said Lambertazzi. "The house barricaded? But nobody would do anything to you."

The lace shimmered. He learnt that she had locked herself up and closed the shutters. Then with Muzio, who cried because of the darkness, she had gone to bed. With her fingers in her ears she had lain there till supper-time. So the hours had passed. "Oh, that was a heavy day!" she said, "not to be forgotten by anyone who lived through it."

All this chattering was just a sensation in his ears. It belonged to her naturally, like breathing and bustling round—just pleasant, no more, no less. As her hand swung the tassels her mind went with them, playing

with the events of the day before. But sometimes, as her husband's inattentiveness increased, the tassel was swung into a bigger half-circle, and her narrative corresponded.

"Ah!" she said. "It was bad. Just think, Bartolommeo! They put a light to the roof over his dead body. And as the great fire mounted up his wife Maddalena jumped into it with a burst of laughter. Then directly after they saw her on the roof, laughing most crazily. She had dragged her elder son up with her—and—everybody cried out when they saw it—with a great sweep, she swung the child over the——"

"Gently, gently," he said. "That is Virgil, my love."

"What?"

He gave no answer. He was busy with his doublet.

She narrated further—that this thing was true; then told him from where she had got it: her chamber-woman, and a half-a-dozen other folk, one of whom quite certainly had been a witness. But he could not gather from her story what the general public thought of the occurrence—the only thing which really mattered to Lambertazzi. Without saying more than "Yes" or "No," he left her. The bed curtains dropped down.

Later in the day, in high spirits, she crossed his path again. Her eyes sparkled above the two red circles of her cheeks, prominent in her pale face. He allowed her to fasten his breast-plate, anxious to be off into the street. There stood his horse. He was in a hurry, and didn't want to listen to her.

"Think of it, Bartolommeo," she cried. "They say that the Lady of Laws is housing Sfiga!"

"Indeed," he said. She put on his mantle.

"Yes. I ask you, Bartolommeo. As if her reputation wasn't bad enough. There's your woman of learning for you. One feels ashamed to belong to the same stock."

He seized his helmet. "Early this morning in bed," he said, "you were killing and burning this man. Actually his fate will not be much better. Now then."

"I must say," declared his wife, "as long as a man is alive, I consider such a situation dubious."

"You wait a while," said Lambertazzi, just going. "If the man is dead, the whole situation will be seemly. And, by the way, his wife is in the picture; provided that in the meantime you have let her down from the burning roof."



CHAPTER VI



THE next morning the Swabian student paid a visit to the house of Ravegnana. Yellowish hair, a huge nose, long limbs, and an expression so surly that Maddalena was taken aback. He wasted no words in declaring his readiness to undertake the mission. His face did not grow any more inviting, yet beneath the puckered brow his eyes shone forth like stars. He grasped the whole situation in a moment—the way, the means, the message, and secret signs whereby he should disclose his identity; for nothing in writing was to be carried. So far so good, in spite of his desperate Italian. But when they had bid him farewell and he was ready to go, he stood there without moving a muscle, muttering: “I danari.” They understood him, though his pronunciation was bad indeed; and Sfiga went hot, for in his situation he could not command a penny. The Lady of Laws, too, was embarrassed. It had never for one moment occurred to her that it was a matter of money. She had imagined that love sufficed. She took the German into the study where he received the necessary means.

Sfiga followed them with his eyes. When she returned later he sent off his wife to fetch something, and then said: “Madonna, it will all be refunded. The next thing I want to say is this: promise me that you will take charge of my children when I die.”

She would rather have reassured him as to his fate; but the physician had not returned, and his condition was grave. So she nodded assent without saying a word; neither did Sfiga say any more. His wife found both silent when she returned. Her eyes wandered round the room with a look of wild anxiety, as if the promise just made was written on the walls.

The Lady of Laws was desolate. The doctor did not come, and round her were only troubled faces. She sent one of her servants on an errand; and he returned to tell her that no one would give him anything or let him buy anything. They had whispered him to go, to go quickly, and not to show himself again.

On the houses new emblems were appearing. Here and there the Lambertazzi coat of arms could be seen, and everywhere his powerful colours were in evidence. “Look over there, your Eminence,” said the servant, “you can see from this window. They are just hoisting it on a long pole. Its red hits us in the face. There—on the other side, too—*misericordia*—

there it is again. It stares at the house of Ravegnana from all sides, God have mercy upon us."

The change was the usual right-about-face. It was very sudden. "Woe to us!" began the protest of the citizen Podesta at the Burgher-House, where he had been relieved of office by Lambertazzi. His speech had been carefully prepared, and occupied six double sheets. "We are stupefied with all this suddenness. We were not prepared for it."

"A change of government," said Lambertazzi, helping him out, "is rather different from an academical oration which one divides up into main points one, two, three, with secondary points and pleasant digressions—which begins with Adam and ends with the harmony of the sphere, to the assenting snores of the hearers. I have struck, just as lightning strikes a rain pipe. You have melted in the fire, cooled down to a new form, and you have no idea how it has all happened. So much the better. Citizens like to be disconcerted. If we treated with you master-furriers, silk-merchants and notaries, we might go on without a settlement till doomsday."

By evening the old government was safely under arrest. The deputies, consuls of the guilds, and district representatives were under new allegiance. Those who refused to take the oath were to be locked up; which, however, was found to be unnecessary. The Gierimei nobility witnessed for themselves the house-to-house searches, followed by immediate arrests and deportations. The mob was jubilant, as it usually was when a government fell. The people crowded round Lambertazzi, tied his colours to their sleeves, kissed his boots, and laughed from ear to ear at the joke of it when he let out with his spurs and scarred their ugly faces. The following day the air rang with cheers; for on the cathedral square he doled out free wine and roast ox. It cost him nothing, for he had paid for it with confiscated Gierimei gold. The Gierimei party recognised that it was useless to attempt anything. With the desertion of the troops and the fall of Sfiga their chance had gone. They withdrew unhappily from the field, and awaited events.

The action of the Lady of Laws was the subject of common gossip. The principal Gierimei was under her roof; what next? It was the speculation of all parties and classes. They betted how Lambertazzi would deal with her. The students, in common with most of the wiseheads, considered that the doom of the Gierimei was sealed. They were moved to fury when they thought of the daughter of their Giacomo di Porta being driven from calamity to calamity, from shame to death. They talked

anew of the old man's strange caprice in dedicating his only child to learning, and of the tenacity with which he had forced his extraordinary ambition upon the University. Ravennana was daily more openly pitied, then defended; and it was not long before they wished to enthrone her as their idol. They saw her shame in a new light. After talking their teeth out about it, they decided that it was a case of violation. Her blameless open life before the whole town could not have been hypocrisy. Moreover, after the most careful enquiries had been made, not a single person could name her lover. But now this act of violation, which they could still make nothing of, became of a sudden useful. They denounced the iniquities of the day, and ended by attributing her misfortune to the evils of Lambertazzi's despotism. Few had suggested this so long as Lambertazzi's ascendancy was in doubt. But this did not prevent them now from uniting with the Gierimei in noising it abroad. The Lady of Laws was the only person in the whole of Bologna who had taken Sfiga's part. She now had the blessing of the Guelf nobility; and the Republicans in anticipation of her fate lamented her as a sacrificial offering. Soon the faint but unmistakable features of a saint began to be recognised.

Lambertazzi, whom everyone watched with suspense, did nothing. Under the tumultuous terror with which he had taken over command, the fact that he had isolated the district around the Ravenna Gate where she lived, seemed a triviality. Yet it would bring complete misery upon her head.

In the Ave Maria hour of the first day the ice which was required for the wounded man could not be got when Stefano called for it. The siege had been proclaimed.

The same evening one of the maid-servants came to the Lady of Laws in tears and begged to be allowed to leave. She could not refuse her. The other left without even asking. The Lady of Laws sent for the three remaining servants. These were her serving-woman Aja, the lad Stefano, and a hunchback man who trimmed the garden and did various jobs about the house. "You see, children," she said to them, "how all living creatures are forsaking me. Go you also. I must not lead you into danger."

The hunchback shook his head—set so deep between his shoulders—and, without saying a word, returned clodhopping to the cellar, to the wood-chopping from which she had called him. The lad Stefano, an adventurous spirit, said that this was the first moment of his life he had really enjoyed. He would go away, but return secretly and bring their

domestic necessities from distant parts of the town. "The first thing I do," he said, "is to go and get some ice, even if I have to steal it."

He came and went continually; at night or twilight threw himself over the garden wall, rendering great service to the besieged. But he also did no small service to himself; for this was the life of his childhood's dreams.

As for Aja, her reply was a shake of the head. "My child," she said, "whether in your pity you were right or wrong, I don't know. I can more easily tell you whether you were wise or foolish. But I know for sure that I must not leave you even if I want. For your hour is very near, and what other woman in the town would dare to tend you?"

"There would still be Sfiga's wife," suggested the Lady of Laws hesitatingly.

"Yes; but just look at her," cried Aja. "Go upstairs and see. There she gnaws at the bedstead, like a wild animal, her blue-black hair all over her face. A fine midwife she would make."

"And you?" asked the Lady of Laws.

"As God's above," she said, "that's true. What have I to recommend me except my five wits!"

Actually it was Aja who held things together under these exceptional circumstances. Her whole life had been uneventful, but, from being twenty years older, she knew better than any of them how to act. As for Ravegnana, her will to be of service was the main thing. She shrank from nothing, but she felt awkward and wrapped up in herself, and failed at this time to realise the right thing to do in an emergency. Goodwill could not help Sfiga, who therefore clung to Aja. Not that she understood anything about dressing wounds either; but she had a gentle hand. His wife was horrified when the old woman untied the bandage and laid bare before her eyes the shockingly lacerated limb, expressing herself with such emphasis that once was enough for Sfiga. She threw herself on the ground wringing her hands, imploring God to recognise the immediate need of His miraculous power. "Ecco l'occasione," she counselled Heaven, her hands stretched forth in the manner of bare-footed friars. "Show Thyself, O God! Now is the opportunity."

"If you would only be quiet," said Sfiga. "Your theology is all wrong. Are we not sunk deep enough in disgrace? With this damned heresy you will push away from us the last scrap of Heaven's goodwill."

As soon as Stefano came in, the whole Ravegnana household hurried together and held a council of war. Then he pulled out of his pockets,

and out of bags, bread, meat, ice, medicaments and wine, with which he had packed and loaded himself.

Once he had to hide the nicely chopped-up lump of ice in the cloth tied about his waist. It had doubled him up with stomach-ache, so that the Lady of Laws served him with the Greek wine, of which he drank glass by glass till the whole bottle was finished. Meanwhile he told her about Lambertazzi's latest acts of terror. One of the Bentivoglios had quite unexpectedly retired into banishment. They said archives had been found with him—letters—"I don't know what," cried Stefano, "foul letters and such like devilries—a piece of luck, I guess, your Eminence—" He put his head on one side, his hand rubbing his stomach—"a piece of luck that the signor up there has had everything burnt to the ground. They say in the town that the most appetising things would have been found with Sfiga. A most powerful conspiracy is being hatched against our gracious lord."

"Which gracious lord?" asked Aja, who was a stiff-necked republican. She packed the wine, ice, and medicaments on the table, getting ready to take them upstairs.

"What? Which gracious lord? Why, Lambertazzi, of course, signorina; who else might he be? Anyhow, he is making himself very large, I must say. When he comes out on to the Burgher-House steps he looks as if he expects the tower of San Petronio to bow down to him. Your Eminence, for the love of Christ give me another little glass of wine. Next time I'll pack the damned ice on my backside."

But it came about, and ever more frequently, that Stefano did not return from his excursions. People had begun to take notice. So he got street-carriers to make the purchases. These men he found lounging about the piazza; and in the shadow of an arcade, or on the river bank, the things were hidden for him. Twice the ice melted on his body when he tried to steal back to the house by a new way. The third time he thought, "Oh, I can't be plagued," and cooled the wine with it in a still bay of the Reno river, and took a midday meal of Samos wine and raw onions, half frugal and half debauch. After he woke up from the long sleep which followed, his Christian conscience compelled him to stretch a point. So he committed robbery, stole a large sausage and a bottle of sugared chestnuts, and came to the house of Ravegnana with the booty in the second watch of the night. He invented a long story about pursuit; for the danger he had run was not dangerous enough for him. But the Lady of Laws, who looked worn out with watching—he found her whiter and

more spent than he had ever known her—begged him to bring a priest at once.

"What?" he cried. "Is the signor blowing through the last hole of his whistle? I thought he was going to live a long time yet."

He ran everywhere looking for a priest. Twice one had got as far as the narrow street at the Porta Ravegnana, Stefano watching from the distance. Each time the representative of the Church had to go back. The Tyrant had put soldiers there. They stated that their reverences could only go on "when all is clear. Enquiries are still proceeding." They dared not connive at letting a priest through, not even if the Holy Sacrament appeared in person. By the orders of Lambertazzi. He had the bishop in his pocket. Nothing could be done. The house of Ravegnana lay under outlawry and ban.

The Lady of Laws lived in a bad dream. The peculiar feature about this period of her experience was that she could no longer distinguish sleep from waking. She was dead-tired. She was also wide awake, and she felt that in former times she had not drunk one-tenth so deeply of life as now. Her sleep was a perpetual listening at the door where Stefano's lightest gesture could be heard, a perpetual listening towards the room above, from which Aja might bring the worst news, a perpetual listening inwards where the new life timorously unfolded itself. Her sleep brought her an inward experience which she had never known before, and which she had never believed possible. At times when someone above stood up hastily or ran to the staircase, when she herself got up with a start, a whole world of spiritual laws revealed itself about her, crystal clear, whose profound self-evidence, uniting with a storm of exquisite sensations, paralysed her heart.

And with it came a home-sickness—but for where? She went about the house as if her trunks were packed to leave. A weary and impatient privacy, such as belongs only to mature hearts towards the end of life, overcame her.

Her child? She scarcely thought about it. To whom belonged it? To her? To this world? To another? To itself? She knew not. To Bologna? "What is Bologna? Where? Outside. I have only to go outside the door and I am there. But to go outside the door is to go back—on the trail of a thousand pathless eternities to go back, against the Law that drags me into ever stranger abodes."

Only Sfiga stood in her way. Like her, he was at the last extremity, his misery infinite. She stood in the room and saw his necessity, but she

could give no counsel. The wounds were mortifying and rotting his leg. Day and night the reek of blood and pus filled the room. He who shut his eyes on Death could smell his presence.

"You will save us, won't you? You will save us?" said Maddalena for the twentieth time, without turning her gaze away from him. She rubbed her hands incessantly, and rocked her hips. "We die," said the Lady of Laws.

Maddalena repeated: "You will save us, won't you? You will save us?"

During the lucid intervals of the fever, he sought with his eyes for a person of understanding, and begged that somebody might be brought to amputate the limb, as he could no longer endure the pain. Her own affliction had made the Lady of Laws abstracted and deep sunk in herself.

But now she was confronted with reality. She got up, and stared life in the face—that life which all must live, just a cold-blooded execution, no more, save that the second endures for a half eternity, in which the axe strikes down.

"Messer, I can do nothing," she said. "No physician comes. No one is allowed here."

Sfiga wanted to complain, but conquered himself. "It was an ill service I did you that day," said the Lady of Laws, her voice dying in her throat. "Maddalena did right; not I. A few more stones flung at us and we should have been free from all this anguish."

"You will save us, won't you? You will save us?" murmured Maddalena.

Sfiga was repelled by the glance of his wild wife. Her affliction crossed his.

The Lady of Laws dragged herself outside, all her limbs turned to ice. She felt like a child who had put together a clever piece of wheel work, and now could not make it go.

"Why have I done it? What had it to do with me?" Life with all its manifestations seemed strange to her. It belonged to another realm than herself. She had made bold to shape things according to the Law, of which she clearly understood nothing. Now she was caught in Hell's mill. She saw herself standing in the Burgher-House, heard herself exchange words with Lambertazzi. "Little doll!" she said to herself. She saw herself at the lectern, always full of ridiculous zeal—important, worthy, puffed-up with something that she had long ago begun to distrust, and which now showed itself as nothing. She saw herself standing by Sfiga's bed, and as she sent the Swabian on his errand. Officiousness!

nothing more. If only she had wanted to be no more than Nothing—what she truly was and always had been. “God! God!” she moaned, making a movement as if she wanted to roll a tremendous stone from her breast, to hurl a tremendous stone at somebody from her shoulders. She threw herself on her knees, overcome by her suffering.

She was in her study-room. Despairingly, yet for the moment calm, she looked round and noticed her bookshelf. Her psalter was there. She rose from her knees and took the book from it. A voice spoke within her, cold but not unkind: “Beware!”

She felt herself on the borders of life, felt that it was dangerous to be alone. The Ego is a strong poison—it can bring healing, or temporal or eternal death.

She went back to Sfiga, sat on the bed, opened at the twenty-second psalm, and with a side glance to the wife said: “Be still.” Then she read, against the groanings which filled the room:

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season I am not silent . . . I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people . . . I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother’s belly. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

The cry of a crane broke in upon the words. “So early in the year?” she wondered. It was the day before Candlemas. With one step she was at the window where blue lobelias were growing in earthenware pots. Below her was Stefano, just tumbling into the garden. At the sound of the bird he swung himself over the wall with more than his usual daring. He dropped his sack on one of the beds and leapt into the house.

She wanted to descend and receive him below, but like an overladen ship her movements were slow. She had scarcely moved from the window when the door to the adjoining room flew open, and with a bound he was standing before her.

“Don’t be too startled, Madonna,” he shouted as he entered. “It’s all over now. Do you know who is coming, is already quite near, and in a minute will be breaking in the door? Lambertazzi himself! His six attendants are with him, if I count aright, and one of them—ugh! I am not a man of honour if it is not his executioner. So many almighty painful

things have happened here of late, that alas! we are getting accustomed to frights." All three in the room looked at one another dumbfounded. Aja appeared at the door, white to her lips. The serving-man could be heard at work in the cellar.

Sfiga was the first to compose himself. He beckoned to the lad to draw near. The fever seemed to have left him, as if with one snatch a red cloth had been torn away.

"My son," he said, "what did you do with my belongings the day I came here? On the top of them is my knife. Go and look for it."

The Lady of Laws, speech stifled in her throat, went up to him.

"Leave it to me," he said. "You can't help. Lambertazzi will sweep the table clean this time."

He took the knife and put it loosely into its sheath. "Come," he said to Maddalena.

"Messer," murmured the Lady of Laws, sinking her hands on the coverlet, "I implore you by Almighty God not to be too hasty. All may yet be well. It may be that he comes with no evil purpose."

Below there was a knock.

"Ravegnana," said Sfiga impatiently, "in a matter such as this I beg you to leave me to my own judgment. You have never stormed a house, I guess, nor"—he continued rather more slowly and with a vacant look—"nor even seen how they do it. We do not behave like Church Fathers at such times."

There was another knock, followed by a clamouring. The Lady of Laws descended with difficulty. "I will open the door myself," she said, as she passed the hunchback. He was standing ready on the cellar steps, the woodchopper in his hand. The Lady of Laws was beside herself with fear—for the first time in her life. Everything within her urged her to flee. If only somewhere a hidden door would open, that she might escape from everything into the open country, as the sun was setting, into the cloak of eternal night, flung forth in pity to receive her. Under that cloak to bring It into safety, under warmth and darkness. It—what? The child, ah! yes. It was the voice of the infant. The child was begging for its life, not she herself. "Quiet!" she said, looking down at herself. "Be not afraid. It is dark and kindly where we are going. Merciful God, give me strength to see this thing through." She leaned over the banisters and trembled, bowed down like grass before the wind when it seems to try to escape the mower's sickle.

The knocks, but a few feet away from her now, became noisier and

more insistent. She took hold of the iron cross-bar to draw it back. With her mind's eye she could clearly see the room above, and the guests whom she could not save. "All right, all right," she cried to the noise and the shaking door. The bolt was drawn. How much easier she now felt it was to face death than to flee from it!

On the threshold stood Lambertazzi, the others behind him. "Come in, Sir," she said: "God sends you here."

"I come at my own behest," he answered. "And in any case you should show more haste in opening to me."

She threw the door wide open to them, making no reply. Lambertazzi gave an order which she did not understand. Then he closed the door, leaving the others standing outside.

In the vestibule it was dusk. A still close air, which seemed to contain something of the odour of old woodwork from the staircase, blent with the damp scent of the garden, and a third element, indefinable yet noble, pervaded the place.

The Lady of Laws opened the door on the left. They went into the study. Here, too, it was dusk. Last year's vine-leaves rustled about both the windows, and the wind moaned between the garden walls.

Lambertazzi stood for a moment and looked round. Books, woollen curtains of a deep blue colour, the picture of the Madonna—on the window-sill a jug containing a branch of fir. The Lady of Laws drew up a chair for him and withdrew to the bookstand. She pulled the curtain well along the rod, then turned her pale face towards Lambertazzi.

"What is happening here?" he asked.

She tried to speak but her voice failed her.

"What is happening here?"

"We"—she replied and the next word stuck in her throat—"live."

He remained silent and looked at her.

"Or," she continued, "we die. Whichever way you look at it."

"That does not tell me what is happening," said Lambertazzi.

"And I," she answered, "cannot tell what you want to know."

"That is coming," he said. With that he sat down, and as he fixed his eyes upon her, his hand resting on his knee, he saw her tremble, saw how she pulled herself together lest he should notice it. But her knees shook beneath her in spite of the resoluteness with which she had just spoken.

He rose and took hold of her to help her to a seat. He felt the despairing shudder that seized her whole body. She offered no resistance. As

he leant over her face, her bloodless lips quivering, he saw her determination to accept death. But her dark gaze melted under his.

"By Jupiter, Ravagnana," said Lambertazzi, "what are you thinking about? Do you imagine that I would kill a woman?"

She sat down. He remained standing before her.

"Now it's time to get to business. Let us talk together. First: is Sfiga alive?" She nodded. "Good," said Lambertazzi. "He will be banished. Second: since when, devil take me, have you been a Gierimei? Do you want Giacomo di Porta Ravagnana, my very teacher, to turn in his grave?"

"I am not a Gierimei," she cried.

"Indeed. Then why does the whole Gierimei tribe pester me day and night on your behalf? Why does this ancient fossil of a Magnificus bore me with his tomfoolery about neglect and remorse? Why do you yourself all this time indulge in this adventure with Sfiga? If you can reconcile all this with the traditional conduct of your house, Ravagnana, I must confess that a woman turns everything upside down in politics, as in everything else."

"Sir," she said, "do you think that the Samaritan first enquired about political leanings before he tended the man who had fallen among thieves?—Man and party politics—I cannot see what they have to do with one another."

"A great deal in times like these. Women have no tact in such matters. Generally speaking that makes no difference, but in your case, Ravagnana, unfortunately it does."

"I see. You may stone a person, and I am to look on quietly because of tact? Because I once held public office? If it had been *you* who had been betrayed," she continued, "I should have helped you just the same."

"Very kind of you," said Lambertazzi. "Fortunately it was I who played the trump card, and not he. There is only room for one of us two in Bologna. As for me, I prefer to have the good cards in my hand. I hold his also," he went on; and sat down. "All of them. When the house was burnt down, one after the other they fell into my hands, and they are now deposited with me. The thing is clear. To-morrow the decree of banishment will be sent to you—to Sfiga, I mean. There is only one thing to be said against you in the matter: you are giving yourself a doubtful reputation."

"Does that mean that your ban against us is removed?"

"Ban? There was no ban. I have merely kept you under my eye for a time, that's all."

"Then people may enter and go as they like?"

"By Bacchus, of course, anyone who wants. You will have enough of the Gierimei train coming here very soon—as soon as Sfiga is away, I dare say. Until then not one of them dares show his face."

"They can stay where they are," said the Lady of Laws. "What we need is the surgeon—he must come at once. And the priest," she added, her voice sinking. "May we send for them?"

"Send for whom you will. Doctor and priest? But which of these two little ravens is the most needed?"

"It is necessary to amputate," she said, and at once called Stefano. She told him straightway to go for Master Jacob and for the priest. One of the men outside accompanied Stefano to verify the permission.

Lambertazzi stood at the foot of the staircase. "I am going, Ravegnana," he said, as soon as the lad had left. "The Rector, old Galeazzo Gierimei, Pier Antonio Guarnieri, Ranieri Bentivoglio—you'll have them all here shortly. You are lucky, Ravegnana. They are trying to find an heraldic use for you. It is always like that. Those who are cut off from real life and unable to act normally become ornaments. Be wise, and do not make your house a refuge for Gierimei."

He walked by her side to the door, then turned round once more and surveyed the whole span of the arched vestibule up to the entrance to the staircase, scarcely visible in the dim light. The Lady of Laws stood beside him. The darkened air of the house seemed to her to quiver from the pain everybody suffered. "These days have not been pleasant to you?" he said, looking her straight in the face. "If it should so happen again that you see through one of my intentions, Ravegnana, be a little less clever. That is the more intelligent course. You see, it is I who am on top in the end."

She opened the door. "One word more," he said. "See that you come through the next few days all right."

"It is perhaps too late," she replied, stepping out over the threshold and looking up and down the street for the doctor. "The gangrene is in the leg."

"I mean *you*, woman," cried Lambertazzi. "Think of yourself. It seems to be necessary to remind you of your condition. What now follows in the Gierimei chapter leave to others, do you understand? Cease brooding on cruelty."

"I thank you for your consideration, late as it comes," answered the Lady of Laws.

He stepped out of the house beneath the glaring eyes of the whole street down to the Ravenna Gate. "Let the decree of expulsion be suspended—the execution of it, I mean—until his fate is settled."

He nodded and went away, his men following him.

The Lady of Laws retired through the dark vestibule. Again the air seemed to stifle her. There was something in it which pressed heavily upon her breast. She was suddenly reminded of her adventure. She was conscious of an odour, a scent, somehow associated with the whole affair, and now again perceptible. "Was it an odour?" she asked herself. No, it was deeper than the senses, it was in the soul, too vague to be apprehended.

It was not long before Master Jacob appeared. When she saw him, she said: "During the necessary operation, I pray you to get the wife out of the way. Give her something to make her sleep, until it is all over—for better or worse."

"But to you I cannot give it, Lady?" he said.

"Why should you give it to me!" she replied.

"You speak well. You are of the Bologna stock, you as well as Sfiga. It is evident that his wife is not from here."

"What has this got to do with the Bolognese stock?" she said. "Man is the same everywhere when he has to rise superior to the pains of Life. . . . Now go and make the wife sleep. She will not know of the priest from me—nor of anything else."

The brown syrup filled the room with a strong but sweet odour. Before they could persuade her to empty the cup it was necessary for Sfiga to command her. The Lady of Laws then led her out of the room with the words: "We shall be back directly." As she closed the door her last glance fell on the crucifix, its shadow trembling on the wall. At the foot of the stairs Maddalena was already half asleep. In Aja's room she dropped down on the bed in her clothes, and did not stir again.

The Lady of Laws laid herself down on her bed, alone in the darkness, and waited. Waited for what? She expected nothing. She was without fear and without hope. Where was the life that had raged and stamped within her, coursed furiously day and night? All was now still and void. She longed to get back to it again—back to the malignant demon of her restlessness. Was not her longing profanity?

"Perhaps so," she thought. "Yet if I am profane I must submit. I

would accept death also with all my heart, if it should now come to me." Not without envy and not without longing she thought of Sfiga. "Would that I were in his place!—But what profanity!

"Ah! I am profane. Let me look at myself more closely. Why do I wish that I were in his place? Because he is now shaken by greater crises than I am; because there stares him in the face, stark and irresistible, as plain as black and white, the certainty of one thing or another, the Either—Or. And, if he lives, what has he to look forward to? We know the misery of the Fuorusciti in this Italy of civil wars. But I continue my life satiated and secure between sleeping and awaking."

That was intolerable to her, and she jumped up with an emphatic No. "What? Am I then so much in love with all these horrors—appalling creature that I am? Is affliction then so dear to my heart? Have I then such a mighty thirst for death?"

She paced the dark room, flinging out her arms in all directions, to the roof above and to the floor beneath. "I renounce everything from this day forth," she said loudly. "My heart is from to-day without house or home, enclosed by nothing, and possessing nothing."

Thereupon a tempest surged within her. Angel hands plucked at the chords of her soul, touching them to a new music—born of exaltation at this new understanding of life. She stood motionless in the centre of the room. Out of the darkness that encompassed her, Life and Death seemed to appear and to approach her in a strange fraternity. Then all that she had experienced passed before her eyes in panorama like captured standards carried in procession after a battle. It was all there, and in this array all was of equal value. No item seemed lighter or heavier, smaller or greater. Now uprose the church door of San Petronio and the hour of her honour; then the laurel trees against the dark firmament in the hour of her shame; and there was the same splendour in both visions. Now she was standing before the students, every eye fixed upon her in respect and the joy of learning; then her tortured body dragged heavily up the stairs to the suffering Sfiga: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" she was murmuring. Both scenes passed before her; both were equally applauded. Then, dumb and reticent in her great need, she was retreating from the Rector to hide herself from the world; and again she was standing at the top of the steps before the whole population of Bologna, calling a halt to the riot. Both standards saluted with equal pride.

"Was I not just now wishing for death? Was that I? Was that just

now? No, it was someone else, and surely an eternity ago. What is Death, what is Life, when one knows oneself!" she thought. She felt these strange companions, Life and Death, draw nearer to her, take each other by the hand, and then enter deep into her soul. Their reception caused great inward turmoil. A new sensation, as of an earthquake, seemed to try to bind her, and at the same time to tear her asunder. As she stood there so conscious of everything, the sensation deepened incredibly and became at once foolish and terrible in its intensity. She stumbled to the bedside and sat down, with a pain that struck through her and made her wince. It was like lightning.

She stared into the darkness, her eyes wide open. Above her there was a noise, a bustling. Again and again the lightning struck through her; again and again the cruel thrusts increased. She whimpered, her hands clasped firmly. All of a sudden the sharp stabbing twinges ceased. Her pains seemed like a rumble, as though a door were being forced. "O, that's the house door! Lambertazzi is there with the hangman and is trying to break in. All right, all right," she whispered.

She came to herself, staring wide-awake into the darkness. Again she heard sounds from above which wrung her very heart. For a brief moment she was eased of her pains. She got up, opened the door, and called the old woman. Hardly had she done so before her agony began anew. She stood with her hand on the door handle, clenching her teeth, and doubled up with pain. "Send for help," again she cried. And as her thoughts, clinging to the afternoon's experience, again grew confused, she whimpered: "Be quick, Lambertazzi is breaking in the door."



CHAPTER VII

IT was a boy, and she named him Mario. Not from any thoughts of the ruins of Carthage and a thwarted career, but rather by a simple and deliberate derivation from the name Mary, thus placing him under the protection of the Virgin, first as a child born on Candlemas day, and then as the child of a virgin. For herself she called him Laureato, because the darkness of his eyes when she first looked into them reminded her of the sky as she saw it between the swaying laurel branches on a certain night. "A woman of Bologna," said Master Jacob as he called in the morning to glance at her labour, "they are hardy folk, these Bolognese," and he went upstairs to Sfiga, leaving her to the women—wise and foolish.

But her child had come, and time stood still. Her own nature brought all the peace she needed. "How are you?" they asked. "Quite well," she replied. "Life goes on of itself."

The midwife remarked that she had thought that a learned woman would have had more trouble in bringing forth a child. She couldn't explain why, but she told everyone whenever they spoke to her about it: "Her Eminence made no more of it than a peasant woman who has a child during the wheat harvest on the land. These scholars have the devil."

"To whom were you speaking?" Ravegnana would ask when the old woman entered.

"The Rector called to enquire," would be the reply, or "Messer Guarnieri sends wine," and on one occasion: "His Lordship the old Galeazzo wishes to know how things are." The second day a cake was sent, brought on a painted trencher by a man wearing the colours of the Bentivoglio family. Ravegnana was astonished, but suddenly remembered the words of Lambertazzi: "They are trying to find an heraldic use for you."

"What shall I tell them?" asked the old woman.

"Tell them from me that they are all good kind people," said Ravegnana, and laughed. Aja conveyed the grateful thanks of the Lady of Laws, especially for the enquiry of the distinguished old Ser Galeazzo. He also asked after his nephew Sfiga, a thing no other Gierimei dared do.

The limb had been amputated, and he was near death from loss of blood and continuous pain. But still he held on.

"By Heaven," said Master Jacob, "you women have got someone down properly this time. But maybe, in spite of your attentions, I will pull this man through—that is, if Mona Maddalena can be kept out of the game. But, merciful God, if she goes to him again, I guarantee nothing!"

He kept her shut up on the ground floor where she had spent the night. Here she slept, wept and enquired. But she visited the Lady of Laws, and allowed herself to see the child and hold it in her arms. Yet you could see at once that she was no mother. She gazed seriously down at it and made the sign of the cross over its little dark head. Then she gave it back, and began to wring her hands and weep freely. "O lady, have you ever heard of such a misfortune as mine? They won't let me go upstairs. I see nothing, and I hear nothing of him. Where have you taken him?" she burst forth. She paced the quiet lying-in room with outstretched arms, her black hair flying loose about her, making them think, in her sadly passionate despair, of her Biblical namesake wandering through the empty tomb.

A week later, the Lady of Laws rose from her bed, and went upstairs. Her first look was at the crucifix. "Here we are," she said to Sfiga. Then it came into her mind that the decree of banishment was already downstairs. She said to him: "Do you still remember that, at the beginning of this bad time, you asked me to take your place in regard to the children? To-day, by God's grace, I give you back your request. Will you be godfather to *my* child?"

"I?" he said. "You had better look for someone with influence, or with money and prospects. Your son will need them."

"I know whom I need," she answered. "Won't you do what I ask?"

"No," he replied. "A godfather must be a sort of archangel. What have I got that I can be of any use to your child?"

"A staunch heart," she replied, and left him.

"Very well," she said later to Mona Maddalena, "it shall be as you wish. I will take you up to Sfiga. But will you behave yourself reasonably?"

"Come! O, do take me!" cried the wife, pulling her towards the door.

"No, child," said the Lady of Laws, "you don't go one step upstairs unless you promise me you will control yourself."

She drew her close to her side and told her what had happened. "Really," she said to herself, "the woman ought to have realised it long ago."

"Have you understood?" she asked, when silence and a look of aston-

ishment were the only response. Maddalena uttered a strange sound and clasped one of her knees.

"Do you realise?" asked the Lady of Laws.

Maddalena swayed to and fro, and said pitifully:

"Oh, he was always such a merry man!"

The Lady of Laws saw that it was impossible to let her go to him yet. Nor did she ask to go on that day. She sat at the window and looked into the garden. She took up the little child, then laid it down again. She walked about the room as if searching for something. Then she said enquiringly: "My jewels, I suppose, were burnt also? I had such beautiful ones. Rubies they were, a whole string of them, each one better than the other, bright red, like the blood of a dove. Sfiga made me a present of them; it was his wedding present."

"Do not worry," replied the Lady of Laws. "Their precious quality is that fire cannot harm them. That is why they were given you on your wedding day. They were a token to you that love in the fire of affliction remains unchanged."

The next day she asked to be allowed to go to him. The Lady of Laws went with her, the child in her arms. In front of the door she grasped Maddalena's frail wrist and looked her in the face. But in the restless depth of those eyes no look could find anchorage.

They entered; the woman looked at his body closely and was speechless with dismay.

He held out his hand. Maddalena touched it timorously across the coverlet. "Do you remember," she asked, "how beautifully we danced that night at Guarnieri's?"

"Yes, my child, I remember," he answered. "But as I am neither a dancer nor an actor, the mischance is bearable."

"You remember still?" She stroked the coverlet.

"I remember," he replied with a sigh of impatience. "Don't worry yourself, all will be well. As soon as you are sensible we will talk things over."

"And you remember still how beautifully we danced?" she murmured in ever deeper secrecy, creeping close up to him and looking for one knew not what. "And it was the last time." She looked at the bed, at the floor. It was as if something had fallen from her hand.

"Good-night," he said. "Enough for to-day." Perplexed, she gazed at him, and went.

The Lady of Laws remained standing before him, not knowing what

to do or what not to do. He spoke: "A perfect woman for a sick man," he said ironically. It was dark. She put the child to her breast. Sfiga watched her.

"You are like a strong tower, Law-Lady. . . Have none of the Gierimei troubled themselves about me?"

"Galeazzo has enquired. Did you not receive the message?"

"So? The old man. That's good, for I need money. Lambertazzi has no doubt seized the greater part of my goods."

"What will you do?"

"Enter the service. It is all thought out. Haven't you got another student ready to risk his neck for you, Law-Lady? Letters must be sent to Sforza."

"What?" she cried. "Foreign service? Milan? Would you take the field against Bologna?"

"One must see," he said, "what life may have in store. Perhaps a Coriolanus part for me."

The days after brought visitors to Ravennana, including some of the Gierimei. She received them in person. Her old Rector was amongst them. He watched her closely as she sat before him full of quiet emotion, the child in her arms. Something lay heavily on his mind the whole time. When he was about to leave he managed to speak. "Who is god-father?" he said.

"I want Sfiga to be," she replied.

"So? Him?" He gripped her hand. "If you should also need an old man like myself, I am at your service."

"But, your Reverence, ought you?" she cried, astonished.

"O God, my daughter, when you acted as everyone of us ought to act in a matter like that, did you question thus?"

It was a mild day, and she accompanied the old man to show him her unaltered respect. During the walk she had to return greeting after greeting. Twice women hastily kissed the hem of her robe. A stranger who was crossing the square was startled by her look. She saw herself pointed out to him, and, as she presumed, fully described. Continually, when she returned home alone, she heard, "Guarda la dotta." At that time people began to apply the same title to the town.

The day after, a stranger was announced, Master Niccolo, of Cortona. When she looked at him more closely she recognised the man she had seen in the street. "Madonna," he said to her, "your name was the first that I heard when I came here recently from Faenza. Here in the

town you are the talk of every house, the wonderful theme of street chatter. May I paint your likeness?"

"No," she replied, "I do not wish to perpetuate my history in any shape or form beyond what is natural to it. . . Rather go and paint Lambertazzi," she suggested. "There you will get back your travelling expenses several times over. He will certainly not refuse you. The younger the ruler the keener he is to see his power confirmed in portrait."

"He will not escape me," said the painter. "But you, Madonna, I must and will paint; it is as the most Holy Virgin herself that you must sit for me. What have I to do with your history, Domina? Or your scholarship? I saw you in the street; that was enough. . . I am going to paint you."

They talked it over for a little time; then she gave way, but for a special reason. Maddalena's behaviour was becoming daily more suspicious. She no longer cried, she no longer spoke, she no longer wished to go to her husband. But she sat with head supported, and stared into the garden. This garden, now desolate and wintry wild, made her worse. She walked up and down it for hours as the withered shoots rustled in the wind. There one could see her leaning upon an old sundial, motionless, her arms stretched heavenwards.

Ravegnana threw a shawl round her shoulders and went out to see what she was doing. Maddalena was standing dumb and transfixed. Ravegnana drew one of her arms through hers. The hand was clenched, the thumb fixed between the first and second fingers. "Woman," said Ravegnana, shaking her, "what are you doing?"

"I am cursing."

"Whom?"

"Lambertazzi."

"Come with me." The Lady of Laws drew her into the house. "Now you shall see something beautiful. A painter is visiting us."

"There is no more beauty," she said, "all is burnt."

The Lady of Laws led her to Sfiga. Reluctantly she allowed herself to be drawn into the room. There she sat down, but as far away from him as possible. He, too, was expecting nothing good. His thoughts were fixed on plans for the future, and he spoke no word.

"Now for Art," said the Lady of Laws. "Come, Master Niccolo, place us on a golden background."

His brushes and pigments were taken to the upper storey, and Maddalena was appointed to choose suitable garments. She had soon hunted

through the trunks, and, what with a blue dress, the doctor's red gown, and various veils, had collected something in which the Virgin Mother of God might legitimately appear. Her enthusiasm growing, she offered suggestions on construction, drapery, light and shade. She took the child herself from the Lady of Laws, and showed her how she ought to hold it. She did this so well, that her husband remarked it: he had never seen her hold any of her own children so well. The painter was satisfied with the setting in which she placed the Holy Mother. She chose a place by the window, where the light could fall upon the figures from the right side. The window-sill also came into the picture, together with blue flowering plants and the view over the garden towards the towers of Bologna.

Maddalena changed her dress every day after the painter came into the house. She had nothing with her except the bloodstained garment she was wearing when the Lady of Laws took her in. But all trunks, boxes, and cases in the house were open to her. She could wear what she liked, and Ravennana and the painter often admired her in a change of clothing. Sfiga was supplied also. After the loss of so much blood he could not keep warm. So Ravennana provided a black fur-trimmed coat which had lain there since her father's time. Thus the painter came upon Sfiga, lost in thought, with the writing-block propped against the one sound knee. Master Niccolo was soon no less seriously interested in this appearance than in Ravennana, whom he had placed with the child in front of a green woollen tapestry. He decided to extend the composition; in fact, Saint Luke should be brought into the picture, occupied in drawing the Mother with the Child. Sfiga shook his head when he heard of it, and continued writing. But that was just right for the painter, who soon had him figuring in the picture with his writing-block, black jacket, and meditative countenance.

Then the painter rose from his seat and gave Sfiga a full view of the picture. His figure in it contributed considerably to the effect of the whole. Presently the women joined them, Aja with them. She had relieved the Lady of Laws of the boy.

Sfiga saw himself with all the distinctness one could wish, standing, or rather kneeling, in a peaceful world, so calm, as if he had lived his whole life among saints. "How one changes!" he said. "A short time ago, and I was only fit for a soldier at a crucifixion."

"Just think of it, Ser Valerio: one month only, and you make such a useful saint," cried the Lady of Laws. "See now, Maddalena, what a

husband you have! Many a good child will make its vows before him, once he is placed in the Church."

The woman looked at her husband dubiously. She glanced at the picture, then again at him. Then she turned her eyes upon the painter, who continued with his work.

He was now painting the oval of Ravegnana's face, which in his model was again filling out. "A beautiful woman becomes really beautiful only after the first child," he remarked.

"And after the others?" asked Maddalena.

He laughed. "At present I am sworn to that particular kind of beauty which belongs to the Most Holy Virgin. I do not know how such beauty shapes to many children."

"Reflect," she urged.

"Very well then," he replied. "When there were several children about the woman I always painted a Caritas, which also makes an effective piece of work. Do you wish it, Madonna?" turning to Maddalena. "Then bring your little ones here."

"Bastanza," said her husband. "She hasn't the stuff in her for a Caritas."

"What? not even for a Caritas?" cried Maddalena, who, through the continual change of clothing, the presence of the painter, and the change from appearance to reality and back again, was thinking and feeling very differently. "Not even for a Caritas, who may be puffed-up, yet good-natured enough. For what then?" She moved close up to the bed.

He took her by the hand and drew her to him.

For a time all was still.

"Ah, you should have seen Her Eminence at twenty," said Aja, and sighed. "At twenty, in Paris. There she had her best days."

"Believe me, ladies," cried the painter, turning from one to the other, "I have in my life painted many women—and it is always the same. When they figure in painting—which is the right kind of expression for the everlasting present—they always talk of the past and the future; boast how beautiful they once looked, and bemoan how terrible they soon will look."

"Yes," said the Lady of Laws from her throne where she sat with the child, "we are the captives of time, we poor women."

"Captives!" cried Maddalena. "Are we not like wild beasts behind iron bars?"

"I'm afraid it is like that," replied the Lady of Laws wistfully. "The wild beast in us feels itself caged. The human in us feels free."

More and more the story was unfolded in the picture with warmth and tenderness, and many bright colours. It became a familiar companion and a singular restfulness breathed from it. Here was a sort of existence where there was no difference between primary and secondary things, no difference between the outer and the inner world. The spiritual law was written with as much impressiveness on the flag-stone pattern of the ground as it was on the features of Saint Luke and the Virgin. One had the feeling that this was the world and yet that it was not. The depicted became reality. What they had lived through, entirely horrible though it may have been, was beheld with a faint smile of incredulous contempt. The bounds in which consciousness is confined melted away, and beholders tasted the peace of the blessed spirits, or of the redeemed.

So varied, however, are the impressions which a perfectly produced picture of life makes on us, that what comforted the Lady of Laws necessarily also troubled her. When she beheld her Madonna-like aspect in the quiet chamber, and the hills and towers which stood out through the windows as though they were everlasting, when she beheld Luke the Saint at her feet, absorbed in his work, lost to time, then there burst upon her soul like Furies the agonies of all the days that had been, and the agonies of all the days that were to come, and she trembled at the thought of the decree in the study. So far she had not had the heart to speak of it.

At this time there came a day which, because of its consequences, Bologna was to talk about for a long time. A storm, half of the winter, half of the spring, swept from the Alps against the Apennines, and in one hour hurled a whole sky of snow upon the town. The astonishment at this strange, though perfectly natural phenomenon, was general. Not a few saw in it the direct intervention of Heaven, and this in favour of the old republican constitution of the town. A Gierimei Lent preacher seized on this interpretation for his text. With apocalyptic fervour, backed by the sturdy trampling snow-gazers, whom by means of all kinds of rhetorical phrases he won as his devotees, he knew how to brew a heady political sermon, in which all the heavenly hosts, so far as they were Gierimei-minded, must have delighted. Lambertazzi gave him the opportunity on the very same day to convince himself how inflammatory was his behaviour, by sending him to heaven. Two bravos crossed his

track for this purpose, and stabbed him to death. But everywhere there was a general tendency to interpret the weather in terms of party politics. There were meetings and murmurings all over the town. The halberds of the mercenaries appeared on a similar scale. When Lambertazzi, with escort, rode through the snow-white street, his cloak flung across his arm, his black barret pulled down over his eyebrows, the people slunk sullenly out of his way.

In the house of Ravegnana the snowy weather was the delight of the painter. He ran from his easel into the garden to enjoy it all. Maddalena stood at the window and watched him roll the snow into a solid lump. She wrapped herself in a shawl and followed.

The impulse to create possessed him like a fever. He threw lump on the top of lump, and patted each with his hands, making them firm, or destroying them, sparkling like white fire.

As Maddalena came into the doorway, the shawl so pulled round her that it outlined her figure, he sprang to the cellar window and shouted to the hunchback, who was planing, to bring him some wood. He wanted to model Maddalena's lightly built figure out of plastic snow.

It made the woman happy to see herself there, a thing of ghostly charm amidst the driving snow. With every stroke of his implement she came out of the snow-mass more and more recognisable. But the lumps kept falling down; and again and again, minute by minute he strove, wresting first her slender shoulders, then her loins and knees from the element. In a sweet glow she stood pressed against the doorpost and watched him. Bewitched by the romping whirl of the snowflakes, she seemed to feel the stroke of his hands go sharply over her whole body—not a nerve which did not respond to the joyous fight of the form-giver with the formless. Her knees gave way, she seemed to swim, to float in the snow, freed between form and element. Once it seemed to her as if she heard footsteps behind her in the house. A breeze brushed by her, but could not awaken her from the music to which her spirit danced.

Up above stood the Lady of Laws with Sfiga. He had remarked that the room had come out much the same in the picture, though to some extent holy.

"Holy," she said, "that may be so. It was always sacred to me, because here I used to find my father. But only recently has it been graced by the presence of two guests, Suffering and Art, the consorts of only the higher forms of life."

"Suffering?" said Sfiga. "Must you first belong to a higher form of life to suffer? There is suffering everywhere."

"Suffering belongs to above," said the Lady of Laws. "Down below there is adversity, shame, despair, misery. For these, I think, Ser Valerio, are but names for the adjusting power of God when chaos persists in man. There is then only a drama, the struggle of a power with material."

Meanwhile she had moved to the window and was watching the painter who was hewing in the snow. After a while she continued: "When this power is understood and accepted as sister to the soul, then, Ser Valerio, I call it suffering. To experience suffering there must be two, God and man. Adversity concerns one only: God. For in the condition which man displays under adversity, I count him neither man nor power, but mere matter, which the Creator plucks in lumps from the whole, wherewith to lay the first foundations of His world-order."

"Guarda la dotta. One would like to know, Law-Lady, where you learnt it all," returned Sfiga. "I will think it over, which it is in my case, suffering or appalling adversity. In any case it will alter nothing." Then he was quiet. The Lady of Laws stood at the window.

After a long silence she turned towards him again. He was sitting upright, and staring at the door. Her eyes followed his. She started back, then slid to his side, where she remained standing, riveted to the bed-post. The blue woollen curtain in front of the adjoining room was raised, and on the threshold stood a figure, muffled from the crown of its head to its feet. In the rifts of the black cloth the eyes moved. It was so frightful, that she thanked God that her child was born. Something shiny was thrust forward under the cloak. Was it after all the hangman? The hose cap was rolled up. She saw Lambertazzi. Her heart stopped suddenly: the decree.

With one step he was at her side. "Why is this man still here?" She looked at the bed in silence. It was her answer.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. "It seems, Sfiga, that you have decided to live. Very good! But you'll say yourself that it has to be somewhere other than in Bologna. Am I to let the next shower of rain point to the re-establishment of the Republic, eh? Is it to be a sort of heavenly portent of the God-favoured Gierimeï rule?"

"A little while longer, Sir," pleaded the Lady of Laws. "You can see for yourself."

"What I see is that you are not in your right senses, Lady. It is a good four weeks since I pronounced my decree. Is Bologna your dolls' house?"

"Decree?" demanded Sfiga. "Madonna, why have I been told nothing of this?"

She explained that she had not had the heart to tell him.

"Heart be plagued!" cried Sfiga. "Everything in its right place. This is very unpleasant for me. I would not have stayed one day longer. Do you think I have need of favours, especially here in Bologna? Be so kind as to call my wife."

"Your wife?" said Lambertazzi. "Look out of the window. There she is, playing snowman with that wretched dog from Cortona who can find nothing in the whole of Bologna to paint except in this house. Things must be very warm with you for this game. A merry household! And there is a song about you, Madonna, too. You have certainly stirred the Muses. Someone has made a sirvente about you—no Gierimei evening amusement where they do not chirp it to the zither. Feeble folk," he cried, thinking of the Muses, "cling to women and the vanquished. . . . But to-morrow morning early, Sfiga. An escort will be provided."

"And my property?"

"Messer," murmured Ravegnana, frightened. "It is surely all written in the decree. Be not angry."

"No," he said. "In the hands of women one is betrayed and sold."

"Quite right," said Lambertazzi. "Whether they be good or bad, they make a fool of you. Here you lie day after day with no idea whatever whether all or nothing is left you. Your money has been called in, anyhow."

Sfiga was shaken. "Confiscated? All of it?"

"As the law commands with traitors," said Lambertazzi.

"How do you know," cried Sfiga, raising himself from the bed, "that I even intended this treason which you yourself are actually guilty of?"

"Gently, gently, my friend; we know what we set our hearts upon these last few years. But why waste words? Have we not often spent the night together under the same tent, and even in the same bed, through the years we were in the field together? How do you know that you do not talk in your sleep?" He laughed. "Keep calm. Everything that I needed was found in yours or Bentivoglio's keep. But do you think that I have time to discuss with you anything so threadbare as thoughts, plans, and intentions? Devil take it, what does the Past matter to anybody? You are down and I am on top, that's the fact of the matter. Your property goes to the State—by right. . . . Why do you laugh?"

"I laugh because you talk about right."

"All the better," said Lambertazzi, "if you can take the blow so easily."

"It is not the first one. Be so good, Madonna, as to call my wife. I must away," he cried in sheer desperation.

"Yes, Messer, but I want you first to be godfather to my child."

He understood that she purposed honouring him thus to spite Lambertazzi. But he never had much feeling for ceremony, and at that moment, faced with such finality, he had even less.

"Must you so quickly tie my adversity to your child?" he said. "But if you so much wish it, Madonna—and I fail to understand why—then bring the child here, so that I can get away."

"Whom else, Ravegnana," asked Lambertazzi, "does it please you to select as godfather to the grandson of Porta, the worthy old Lambertazzi, besides a banished traitor? Why not order me to throw open the prisons? It will give you a richer choice."

"Thank you, Messer. There are still a few respectable people at large in Bologna. The Magnificus has done me the honour of acting as the second godfather."

"Ah!" he cried, "the Scholar-Republic of Bologna! a State within a State! I know you academic folk—very fine. You will see what sort of a christening present the Magnificus has got for you. They were voting yesterday. I heard of it in the Burgher-House, and thought the whole Senate had gone mad, especially the Rector, old Gierimei fossil that he is. Blessed Bologna! Get out of this place," he cried to Sfiga. "What can you lose in a town where women and scholars have the last word?"

He went away.

For a time there was silence. Then Sfiga spoke: "All is lost. Have I been on the battlefield so many years for this town, and yet not a soul will lift a finger to help me now? The whole Gierimei nobility must have collapsed to a man. But alas! it is scarcely surprising. All lost! But now for the next step. We must send to old Galeazzo at once. It will not be too much to ask that he comes himself. He will take care of his skin, I know. It will be hard to get him out of his fox-hole castle."

The Lady of Laws fetched the decree of banishment, and served it upon him for Lambertazzi. Sfiga had hardly commenced to read when there were hurried footsteps on the stairs. Maddalena entered with the painter. Looking well and fresh, her face all aglow, she ran up to Sfiga, her dark hair flying about her head.

"Quick, quick," she cried, while the painter shook the snow from his

cap, "you must get up and look, it is only one step to the window. You must see me. Master Niccolo has made me so beautiful. Try. Get up. It will soon be gone."

"It will soon be gone, that's certain," he said. "Make yourself ready, we are leaving."

She burst into tears.

"Where to?"

"We shall see," he replied.

The hunchback entered. With an awkward smile he held out to the Lady of Laws a crutch which he had made in the cellar. There he stood, a miserable-looking little object, his face of the same dirty yellow colour as his clothes. When he laughed, his lips, already bitten thin, disappeared, making one think of a gnome. He was so proud of his work of art that she would not hurt his feelings. It was, moreover, what was wanted." "Look what Theodore has brought!" she said. "He has thought of everything down there in the cellar."

Sfiga shuddered and said: "Give it here." The Lady of Laws turned and left the room.

Outside Maddalena fell upon her neck. "I cannot leave, I will not, I shudder at the thought of the life before us," she cried.

"Child," said the Lady of Laws, "you are thrown on each other."

"I would rather be dead," moaned the woman, leaning against the banisters and wringing her hands. "I cannot, I will not leave. How can I show myself again before my brothers like this—in this pass—before the Filippeschi of Orvieto—and crawl before their puffed-up women-folk—I who married with such pride in proud Bologna? Must I go with Sfiga? And where then? No, I cannot. I will not. It will be the end of me."

The Lady of Laws turned to the painter with a look of despair. He seized Maddalena under her arms and lifted her to her feet. "Courage, Madonna," he said to her. "I will come with you."

"Are you not tied to this little room and your Mother of God?" she asked in tears.

"That is all finished," he cried. "I am like the serpents, who creep away when the egg is laid. Now I am for the highway and the journeying, and you along with me, young lady."

There was a knock at the door. Stefano came hurrying in.

It was nightfall, and in the room the christening took place. On the table, which was covered with a richly coloured Levantine cloth, stood

two silver candlesticks, one on either side of the crucifix. The choir-boy swung the lamp. The incense rose in little clouds enveloping the picture of Mary, and the priest as he bowed. The few who attended the ceremony remained silent. Stefano and Theodore watched from the doorway of the adjoining apartment. The painter stood with Maddalena in the room. By the side of the bed on which Sfiga lay dressed, the Magnificus was seated. The Lady of Laws sat upon her miniature throne. Sfiga laid his hand upon the child. His lips moved; but his words were not heard.

The Rector pulled out a beautiful chain of gold, on which dangled a bulla of excellent workmanship holding a roll of parchment. He hung it round the child's neck, put the locket in the little hand, and carried him to his mother. "See what he brings you," he said. She unrolled the parchment and read. It was the demand of the academical senate of Bologna to the Doctor of Laws, Olimpia di Porta Ravennana, to remain in her scholastic office.

The parchment fell from her hands on to the child. Then she took up both in her arms, and said, smiling tearfully: "There must be many Gierimeï in the senate."

Afterwards she stayed with Sfiga and helped him to form his plans. The old Galeazzo had written letters to Florence. There Sfiga could get money through Strozzi and await further developments.

Early the next morning there was a beating of drums in the street outside, for soldiers were massed there. A carriage drew up in front of the building. The house-tops were black with people. "What is happening?" asked the Lady of Laws. "I thought it was all to take place quietly."

"It is just possible, your Eminence, that I let slip a word yesterday," cried Stefano, who jumped excitedly about the house in anticipation of the journey. The Lady of Laws had handed him over to Sfiga to be of service to him. "Messer must see how highly he is thought of in Bologna," said Stefano.

It was a sad affair. The Lady of Laws feared most for Maddalena, but she came forward calmly, holding the painter's hand. Her eyes were on the ground, and a black veil hung over her head. The Lady of Laws had used it when she was in mourning for her father.

All eyes rested upon Maddalena in admiration of her noble bearing, her great dignity, and the brave way in which she bore her sufferings. Her appearance raised in the painter's mind a fleeting vision of the sorrowing Andromache. He could not take his gaze from this troubling

figure. Compared with hers, Sfiga's appearance, as he was helped out by Ravegnana and Stefano, was much less appealing.

"Guarda la dotta," they shouted from the house-tops. The armed soldiers did not interfere. But when they commenced to raise cheers for Sfiga, the drums began to beat.

He paid no heed to any of their cries. He had had enough of the *vox populi*. But his wife raised her lovely eyes, burning with timorous delight, to the surrounding roofs. The response was a renewed "Evviva lo Sfiga" so resounding that it drowned the noise of the drums, while their hero broke into perspiration in his struggle to get into the carriage.

"Bastanza," he cried when he had mounted, "enough of this play-acting. Let us get on." He seized the hand of the Lady of Laws, crying, "Madonna, what must I say to you? I have always wondered how Our Lord and Redeemer could think so well of a world of stupid fools as deliberately to descend to it. But since I have known you I have come to think that here and there he had half-brothers and sisters in it who drew him; and that the rest of the rabble was negligible."

There was another roll of the drums. The carriage moved off. The Lady of Laws only had time to stretch out a hand to him, her thoughts occupied with this strange commentary. Maddalena cast her last look over the garden wall. But her likeness had melted into water, for a thaw had set in since midnight.



CHAPTER VIII

THE Lady of Laws had received her song, her sirvente; and Time was to do the rest. Without acclaim, without fuss, she went back one day to the University where new students awaited her. Again she expounded the laws. But how was it that inquiring eyes stared through the lecture-room wall? Formerly everything had gone so lightly and easily; or else it was that she had refused to notice. Oh, what people they were, these scholars! Why eat, drink, sleep, teach? Why explain Justinian, the teaching of Peter of Lombardy, of Thomas Aquinas? Why bother about youth?—She did it in order to eat, drink, sleep, to expound Justinian, Lombardy, Thomas Aquinas, and Moral Philosophy and bother about youth. God knew further; He understood; she didn't. And did it never occur to one of these scholars that all men have to do is to be done with a light hand and with smiling ambiguity? Did none of these people know that, whether they acted quietly or noisily, openly or secretly (but always with trivial, pompous bourgeois zeal) behind everything something quite otherwise was hidden—the averted, the real, the unexpressed; something to which every richly endowed soul is fundamentally tied, yet revealing in itself only the outward semblance; flowing, quivering, ever changing, something which is without negation or affirmation, outward form or inward form, good or evil, I or you?

"Must we," she thought to herself, "in this semi-fluid life of mankind, first look death in the face, as I have done, in order to look life in the face?" She saw her colleagues stuck there like fungus on a wall, believing no other kind of existence to be natural. So she turned her back on them and sought the atmosphere of homely things—yet dangerous to a growing soul.

"You are a stranger to us," said the Magnificus. "Why do we never see you now, although you are so often invited by the Gierimei?"

"Because of the taste which is in my mouth. Everything has lost its flavour. What I used to call sweet or sour is now insipid."

"It is like that after every illness," he said. "But what is it you desire?"

She could not say. But she learnt it during the next evening mass. As she raised her eyes to the crucifix she suddenly felt in her heart the thrill of martyrdom.

But danger! the same heart warned her. Danger, fair Lady of Laws! Understand that not merely pain is meant when you are driven away from Desire. What is meant is the third thing, new and till now nameless. But be still, or how can you listen for the new evangel, so far unuttered, yet palpitating through all human existence, waiting for the new Son of God who will understand and pronounce it? And it will be all too cheap to go back half-way and court death. Death awaits everybody.

Time meanwhile ambled quietly forward like a lady's palfrey. It was unendurable, yet it was endured. Stefano came one day to take away the picture. A buyer had been found in Florence. The Lady of Laws was glad to see the young fellow, for he was a piece of the good old days. Then she took sorrowful leave of the Bolognese Madonna. She had often towards evening mounted to the room, dejectedly to gaze at it, unable in her longing and envy to regain the aloofness and sorrowful peace which the picture expressed.

Stefano talked about his new master and about the painter. The journey had been difficult enough. "In Florence," he said, "I thought we should be in heaven. Beds under our bodies, a roof over our heads. What followed, however, was more like hell. Three days had scarcely gone when a beautiful circus and tournament was set up in the square of Santa Croce. In Florence there is something new every day. Of course, my lady went. The saints know that for weeks the poor soul had seen nothing but the sick chamber, and heard nothing but Ser Valerio's curses. And since no lady of high rank like her, a stranger too, can walk in the streets alone, the painter goes with her. Ah! he has made a nest for himself in every town. O, misericordia! O, the fun that evening! Yes, they returned home late, but the gracious master is generally in such a bad mood that one returns home in time to catch it. And one day a panther broke away from the show in the square. Just think of that! Or at least it was some such beast. And the two of them had to get out of the way pretty quick with their hearts in their mouths. Yes, Madonna, the painter is no longer with us. But he greets you."

Time was uneventful. It could only be measured now by the new faces which appeared at the lectures. Three years had gone, and she had only lived with herself, for there was no other society which could give her that glow which made life possible.

For the third time came Candlemas. Meanwhile her friend Sfiga was bestirring himself. He was trying to get re-established, and had formed a condotta with which he was fighting for Sforza. Then Stefano

came over the hills with gifts. This Bolognese stripling had changed; he was raw-limbed, and more gallant. He had developed into something between a soldier and a valet. What he brought to the Lady of Laws was a strip of gold cloth suspiciously ripped and cut. Also a picture of the Madonna of the Pisa school of painting, not a large thing, scarcely three feet high. "But I divine the frame is worth a good few pence," said Stefano. "My master sends it; told me to hasten and get it to you by Candlemas. Every year about this time we think of our terrible days together in Bologna. Unfortunately in the other years we were not rich enough to send you a really good present. Now, it seems, we can do it."

"My son," she said, "from where did you get these things? I shouldn't be at all surprised if this piece of gold-stuff is off a Church vestment. Tell me the truth."

"Of course it is," he said. "It's loot. What else do you think?"

"So? You've robbed a Church. Man, don't you know that means excommunication of the first degree?"

"Yes," he said, "it would, if the nest hadn't been under the Church ban. The papal troops helped us to storm it. Don't worry yourself. We are particular about what we touch."

"So? And Messer sends that to me."

"Yes, to you. To whom else is he so indebted? But you can be at rest, his wife hasn't been overlooked. I went to Orvieto first." He stopped talking, thinking to himself, and rubbing the stuff between his fingers. "'Tis a genuine piece, part of a most magnificent loot which we made in San Vigilio. Mona Maddalena has had a share every year. I've been down to her six times. Those vile-tempered turkey-cocks, the Filippeschi, must not think of her as a poor woman. And we, your Eminence! The saints only know how often the knife has been at our throats."

She sent him off to eat and sleep—then examined her share of the loot of San Vigilio. "Away with it!" was her first thought. On a second thought she found in this offering of noble poverty no reminder of the sin of plunder, but rather warm-hearted friendship. Later on she attached less importance to the presents either way, and gave her father-confessor a sum of equivalent value. Both the gold-stuff and the picture disappeared into the chest. Next Candlemas she received a pair of beautiful lamps. "It's mounting up," said the Lady of Laws.

Her child Mario Laureato was a boy with a head full of strong-will and merriment. It was his nature to try to get hold of whatever he

wanted, and to bite, scratch, hit out, and bang his head on the ground when he didn't get it.

"Jesus! A wicked young gentleman," said Aja. And on the occasion of such outbursts the most lugubrious views were taken of Ravegnana's adventure.

The Lady of Laws procured a birch-rod and set out to get even with the bandit nature in him, not an easy piece of work, more especially as, when she came home from the University, he was an innocent little rogue who had never done anything wrong.

"You have taken Aja's basket from her."

"Yes, mother, I wanted it."

"You have hidden it and won't say where you have put it. Where is our little dog going to sleep now?"

"On the floor," said the child. "I want the thing for something else."

"Give me that basket."

"No!"

"Before I have counted three you must give me that basket. One, two——"

"Three," said Mario, his black eyes sparkling with pride because he could count so well. But he did not surrender the basket. No. Even under the blows of the birch he persisted in No.

"Let him keep it, lady," pleaded the old woman, who couldn't bear to see him thrashed so hard. The Lady of Laws really laid into him when she made up her mind. The thrashing was not a piece of fun; he screamed himself hoarse, but the basket was not forthcoming.

"Very well," said the Lady of Laws, "if the dog hasn't his bed this evening you will sleep on the floor. Whoever robs another of his bed shall know how it feels." But he refused to yield; and through his overhanging disordered black locks sobbed out of his little mouth, "But I am no dog"—which she had to concede. The thing was rather awkward; she had made a mistake in comparing him to a dog. But when evening came she laid him down on the floor-boards, a blanket under him, saying: "Pray to God that he takes the bad heart away from you this night and gives you a new one."

"No one shall touch me," cried the child, full of pride and fear. "I'll see to that; I'll keep as I am."

The Lady of Laws sat in the next room, a candle by her side, and reproved herself for speaking too figuratively to the child. With natural passion he took everything for fact. When she was going to bed she bent

over him with her candle. Psyche could not have bent over Cupid in a more beseeching way. She put the light on the floor and crouched beside him. Then something fell on him; but it wasn't a drop of tallow, only a hot tear, as she pulled the little night-shirt over his limbs. He opened his eyes, put his arm round her neck, and said half asleep, "I want to get into bed."

"But you have taken away poor Prezioso's bed, and left him in the cold."

"Listen," he proposed, "let me come to you."

She shook her head saying, "I am not going to bed. I am so sad to know I have such a naughty child that I cannot sleep."

He was now fully awake, and felt the tears falling on him.

"Mother, dear," he said, and his little hand slipped coaxingly into hers, "let me talk to you about it. I have hung up the basket on a string in the garden so that the funny bird with a wig on its head can swing in it to-morrow when he comes. He rocks on the branch so prettily. Now I will come to bed with you." She picked him up, and pressed him to her warm heart. Then he smothered her with kisses, and hugged her as if he wanted to kill her, and promised of his own accord always to be her sweet little boy.

She lay in the dark, the stars shining on her bed, the child's hair shimmering with a blue gloss under their pale beams. Her heart thrilled with feeling. She wanted to thank God for a kingdom, yet in her gratitude she was conscious that there was something lacking. Her lips, moving in prayer, sought through the darkness the natural object of her feelings. Instead of thanking God for a kingdom they crept like street thieves on to the head of the child. Passionately she kissed him. All she possessed, all that she had missed, was animate in those caresses. Then she wept on his raven-black hair and kissed him again and again. Tired out she lay still, her face wet with tears. Then the moon came up. And, as if it were the god of women, its presence stole silently into the chamber and gazed upon her sweet distress. Yet she was as strange to herself in this torrent of feeling as, in a way, the whole thing was natural to her.

"O sister Nature!" she thought, "is there not a smile at the end of everything to lift it into the light of the skies!"

One afternoon she took her wild little boy Mario Laureato by the hand, and went with him out of the narrow garden. Then they descended over the Reno meadow to the river's edge. No one was in sight; so they stopped there, and started to pick spring flowers growing in the grass.

Very soon the river attracted the boy more than the quiet field; so she let him splash about with his bare feet at the water's edge. But his smock was soon wet, and she grew tired of watching his every movement. So she stripped him naked, took off her long girdle, tied it to the boy's waist, and held him by a length of cord. She herself sat down in the grass at the water's edge, her head resting on her hand.

Guittone, a council syndic, a native of Florence, who was enjoying the landscape, chanced to see her sitting there. He was also a poet, and in fact the author of the sirvente about her. Till that moment he had not had the good fortune to make her acquaintance, for she never appeared in society, nor did she receive visitors. On her way to and from the University she was veiled and unapproachable. Now, at last, he was to encounter this dauntless person, the living theme of his poem. He hurried across the meadow, went up to a willow near her, leaned against it, and took stock of her.

She recognised him and returned his greeting.

"How am I to speak to her?" he asked himself. Not as other women, that was certain. Something was owing to her unusual character and mien. He ransacked his brain for a suitable opening; but in vain. The brilliant words with which he had thought to address her failed him. He asked himself why he was so baffled, but could find no reason.

Was he, he wondered, disenchanted because he could find no flash of daring in her eyes, nothing in her appearance which suggested her lovely adventure, no wild despairing chastity, nothing which bore any relation to his sirvente? His poem was wrong, or her appearance was deceptive.

Confronted by these two conflicting realities, the one before his eyes, and the other a poet's creation, he stood confused. But he reflected that he had not yet spoken to her. His speech, therefore, must be impressive, for she would be wondering at his silent stare. So he adopted Lamber-tazzi's parlance, the most impressive that he knew.

"Why do you hold your Cupid on the leash?" he asked, folding his arms in what appeared to him an appropriate attitude. "Should a woman so beautiful have any fear that he will slip away?"

"Objectionable person," she thought. "What sort of creature is this? If his words are a quotation it is a silly one, and if this is his own language it is worth nothing at all."

"How can I serve you?" she asked.

"Serve!" cried the poet. He seized on this word, a little thing, a mere

bagatelle compared with the emphasis he put on it. "I have for a long time served the most beautiful and intelligent woman in Bologna with a lay which I may say, without exaggeration, is not altogether unrenowned. And to this day I do not know whether she says yes or no to it."

"I say no," she retorted.

"What is your objection to it?" he asked, growing animated, and moving one step nearer. "Every rhyme fits as it should do, and the ripresa at the end of the strophes also. But I will reserve my own judgment, Madonna. All the great bards of Bologna, Arezzo, and even Florence might well give thanks to God if they could produce the like even once in their lives."

The Lady of Laws looked at him courteously, and was silent. All she thought was: "What a pity that such a beautiful day should be spoilt by this intrusion."

"You say no?" he continued. From his expansive manner it was evident that he was prepared for a lengthy conversation. "As a lady of taste and culture what objection can you have to it? What? But stay—I laugh at the thought—can it be that the lady Ravegnana affects the coyness of a maiden of fourteen fresh from the cloister? No, I really wish to hear your reasons, Madonna, for the sake of the human soul I serve, if I may say so."

A sensation of disgust which she could neither understand nor control came over her. "Messer," she cried, "can't you take your hands off the human soul? That is the best service you will do it."

"You astonish me," he said. It was an unnecessary remark, for his astonishment was so obvious. "You almost make me believe, Madonna, that you are ignorant of the sirvente of which I speak."

She pulled the child up the bank and commenced to dry its arms and legs. The poet looked on and asked himself why in the world she was so obstinate towards him—her minstrel. He decided that it was due to bitterness. The construction gave him a lead. He looked down at her and felt sure he was right. Bitterness was natural enough in her case, he thought. But could there be a better hand than a poet's to touch a bud which has been violently unfolded; which, with the awakened desire to blossom within, and the brown rent sepals cloaking it without, knows not whether to bloom or perish?

"Madonna," he said, lifting his mantle with a smile, "it is the gods who have brought us together in this spring meadow. Yes, I will prove it to you. Allow me to repose beside you."

He lay down, and with his sleeve fanned the scent of the sweet smelling grass into his nostrils. "A refreshing fragrance, a day for Cupid and the graces. Hallo!" he cried, "I've caught a grasshopper," and held it towards Mario Laureato. At the same time he continued his conversation with the Lady of Laws. She stared stonily at the river.

"Do you know what you need, good Madonna?" he said.

"If I did know, the last person I should gossip with would be a poet," was her sombre reply.

"Now we have got to the point from which we can start our talk," he answered. "Listen, Madonna. Intellect and passion have driven you to lead a lonely life. Do you think I don't know that? O good Madonna, here sits one who among these Bolognese with their hard lives and hard thoughts is as lonely as you. Here, Madonna, sits a man of Florence. Do you understand what that really means?" he said bombastically, as she looked at him.

"Of course I do," said the Lady of Laws, testily rubbing her child's body.

"But only Heaven knows," he said, "what you are now thinking about it. We, Madonna, are the select souls of Italy. We are the great thinkers, the children of light. Oh, what poverty-stricken lives people live here in Romagna! But we of Florence are the redeemed. We are they who cause the day after to-morrow to dawn. We are they who see beyond this wretched existence. We are they who come to grips with realities. We can laugh at realities. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, of course," she said. "Florence exports bankers and fools before all else. Did you want to tell me this? Or what else was it? As you seem to have come to us as the apostle of Florence, what is your message to Bologna?"

"If it is a message," he said, "it only concerns the elect, and so, Madonna, may I take the liberty of delivering it to you? Mankind—hear me—can soar far above the misfortunes of life. Dear Madonna, do you not know that?" he asked her, smiling.

"Yes, that has been known since the crucifixion of Christ."

"No. Not so. Suppose that I who wait here, Madonna, could rightly understand why the coarse brutes of Bologna are afraid of approaching a woman like you, supposing that I felt like them, and supposing, Madonna, that I also were one of the elect who disdain to allow their senses to express themselves except beneath the smiling sunshine of the

intellect. What then, my beautiful and lonely woman! Oh, you don't know yet how suddenly everything becomes fluid, and how suddenly the sap wells up, how everything trembles in sweet confusion when flesh and spirit want to draw near to each other and be one. Then must, as it were, scales fall from the eyes of both, then must each understand its unblessed and fruitless half-nature. Both, Madonna, must forego their enmity and in a new exquisite world reconciled to itself and the god-head——"

"Confound you, my dear man!" cried the Lady of Laws as she sprang to her feet, "go and squirt that somewhere else. What in the name of the hangman has it all to do with me?"

The poet Guittone, supported on his elbow, regarded her. He smiled slowly and expansively. "Dear Madonna," he said, "what have you got against a man?" He looked at the water where her child was jumping about, and said again: "What have you got against us?"

That word "us" made the Lady of Laws start. A strange sensation went through her, the sort of thing that comes to us in thought and experience when, without clearly understanding, we feel instinctively that something is wrong. "Us," she thought indignantly as she shook the sand off her dress. "Us? Does he mean men? Whatever can the fellow mean by including himself?" Quickly she reviewed in her mind all the men she intimately knew. Before her mind's eyes passed Lambertazzi, her father, the Rector, Sfiga. She looked at them and found everything right. But with this Guittone it seemed otherwise. It was, as he spoke, as if some power had snatched bread and wine away from her and left her to bite the wind. Was it the fault of the man himself? Or was it because he was a poet? Ravennana had never before met a man of this breed. "Perhaps," she thought, "here is Nature's right settlement, and it is arranged that when a man is a poet he must live an attenuated life. But that is misfortune enough. Shall we into the bargain make faces at the poor devil because he looks like a real man and is nothing of the kind?"

"Why do you laugh?" asked Guittone, and at the same time laughed himself.

"One must be fair," she said. "One cannot look for the same fruit on every tree. I have therefore just decided, Messer, to have your sirvente sung aloud to me from beginning to end. I presume that my serving-man knows it, for he whistles it when he is chopping wood."

"Indeed," said Guittone, "they sing it up and down every Bolognese

street. In the law courts the notary scrawls it among his reports and pushes it into his transactions."

"Va bene," she said, "I will acquaint myself with it. If what you say be true, then I garner the best fruits of your life."

"I thank you, Madonna," he said, and stood up. "It pleases you to see in me a sort of garden-bed for sonnets and sirventes."

"Yes, my dear Signior Guittone," said the Lady of Laws as she laughed. "Either one lives or does not live. Isn't it so?"

A cry of the child made her turn her glance to the meadow. Some people were approaching. There were a litter, bearers, and saddled mules led by the bridle. Two horsemen stood out prominently at the head of the troop, which, a long way behind, was followed by thirty lancers. One of the horsemen was conversing at the window of the litter, the other formed a link with the bodyguard. They were all sauntering over the meadow in her direction.

Mario Laureato, all naked as he was, sprang away from his mother, and ran towards the procession. Another little boy stretched his arms out of the litter as the naked child came up to them through the grass and flowers. He let himself be lifted down by the horseman. He was older than the son of the Lady of Laws, finely dressed, and, as she now recognised Lambertazzi in the man, it was evident that the little boy was his son, and the lady with whom Lambertazzi was speaking was his wife. Lambertazzi's son went up to the naked child, who looked at him with his hands behind him.

"You have got nothing on," he said.

Mario replied: "I have just come out of the river."

"I want to go in, too," shouted Muzio gleefully, and hand-in-hand they ran towards the bank.

In the meantime Mona Clarice had recognised both the Lady of Laws and her child. "But Muzio!" she called from the litter. She spoke a word to the bearers, who had to put the litter down and go after him.

"But why?" asked Lambertazzi. He was tired from his ride, the meadow was sweet-scented, the afternoon was hot, and the hour strange enough for an appearance of the gods, great or small.

"I pray you to be careful," said his wife. "Can't you see the Lady of Laws? The child is hers."

He looked.

"Ah, the Tyrant," remarked Guittone. "I'm off, Madonna. Who has ever known his lordship have anything pleasant to say?"

Meanwhile the servants had caught up with the little Lambertazzi. They got him away from Mario Laureato, talked to him, and then lifted him up as he didn't want to do as he was told. He struggled, cried, and strove to get to the water. Mario jumped about with joy in the grass, delighted at all the noise. Then, because the lady in the litter made a violent gesture, the man who was with the mules also had to bestir himself to help to get Muzio away from the forbidden child.

The Lady of Laws went and fetched her son to her side. Muzio gave vent to a murderous cry, beat about with his fists, and caught the mule-driver in the mouth. Mario rolled about in the grass from laughter; his mother picked him up, while in the meantime, Lambertazzi, who was also laughing, set a whistle to his lips. It was a signal to his retinue. He put Muzio in his saddle and commanded the litter and half his retinue to go back to the town. Mona Clarice started to sermonise him, but he pulled the curtain of the litter down and beckoned to the bearers, who soon fell into a quick pace. He himself came slowly riding towards the Lady of Laws, while his bodyguard awaited his further orders in the middle of the field. Then he put the child down from the saddle and let him run where he liked.

The poet had not gone, for Lambertazzi had fixed him with his eyes. He lifted his hat and bowed. "Little Dante," said Lambertazzi, "how are you? Are you pregnant with a new sirvente? Go back to your desk; you have my permission."

"Lady," he said, watching the Florentine walk away, "so can a person sink. Whoever would have believed that Ravegnana also would have got into the hands of the poet? *Eheu, fugaces*——"

She was silent, paying attention only to her child. She was looking towards the river bank where the poet was wandering along, his mantle slung over his arm. Lambertazzi sat in his saddle looking around him, his hand resting on the haunch of his horse. "This Florentine isn't afflicted by his income; neither does he suffer from his digestion or disposition," he said. "He will never fall ill. What others sweat through their ribs in intermittent fever, he shakes off in a sirvente, a madrigal, or a ballade. Making poems is quite a healthy business. He has only one worry, his thankless town has never banished him. But how could they! With the best will in the world they hadn't a good enough excuse." Then he went on again: "You are a very silent person, Madonna. The more you make others talk about you, the less you say yourself." He looked down at her. "Have you heard from your friend Sfiga? He has made a splendid

havoc of two castles for Sforza; such a pleasure to me. He is a man of great industry. Yet none of it really helps him; it goes to the account of anyone but himself. But an old witch told him this ten years ago, as we were encamped together at Santerno. She disembowelled a black hen and told him by the thing's kidney as it quivered. I said nothing, but took note of it. Sfiga was sceptical; but he put a jettatura round his neck and covered it with his doublet. But what is the use, when Fate has spoken?"

"Would you have believed it of yourself?" she asked.

"No, not I. But I am Lambertazzi. If I were anyone else I'd hang myself straight off. I wouldn't wait for a gypsy to encourage me."

He looked down at the predella, a piece of red velvet, stitched with gold and lined with leather. "For three years," he said, "this man of Bologna has been pushing up through the ruins heaped all over him. Three years. A long time, isn't it! But I was on the top, and I am still on the top. Yet things may change." He looked at the river bank where the children were shouting. "The unfortunate don't know their good fortune," he said. "The hungry don't know how good it is not to be satisfied." The Lady of Laws leaned silently against the willow. "You won't find a true epigram," said Lambertazzi, "without its being translated into Latin. I will give it to my secretaries. Those fellows have had nothing to do except catch flies since the Bologna clock-work started to run a little by itself." Then he asked: "Is this naked child yours?" and put the whistle to his lips. As soon as he heard it, his child Muzio came away from the bank, but not Mario. He whistled again. "Why doesn't he come?"

"Why should he?" she said. "He doesn't know you, and he likes to be where he is."

"Call him for me."

She called, ashamed though she was to raise her voice. But he came, and she was glad. She couldn't have sworn that he would obey.

Wet and naked he ran up shouting, and threw himself upon her knees.

Lambertazzi looked on. Then he reached down and took hold of him, and sat him in front of him.

"Where shall we ride to?"

"Into the water, into the water, so that it splashes up."

"That is not bad. What are you going to be when you grow up?"

"I shall ride." He jerked about in the saddle, and a few drops of water from his wet body fell on to the horse and tickled it.

"Then I must give you the horse."

"I shall get one from my mother."

"Is your mother so rich?"

"My mother has everything," said the child, and gripped at the horse's mane. Then he turned round and saw his face in the rider's breastplate. "My mother has everything quite alone." He took hold of the sword hilt and tried to pull it out of its scabbard. "What is this for?" he said.

"I'll tell you when you've pulled it out."

Mario clenched his teeth, and tried and tried. It was wonderful to see how the naked child gripped at the steel and tugged it about, his body at times half hidden in the yellow mane of the horse. The rider did not help him. Then Mario shouted.

Ravegnana thought it was from pain, and came up. No! it was a cry of joy; for he had pulled out the sword. But he had caught hold of the blade; blood flowed from his hand, but he did not see.

"Ecco!" he cried, holding the sword crossways over his body. "What is it for?"

"For that." Lambertazzi showed him his cut hand. He looked, and because it was now beginning to hurt him he made a wry face.

"Now we shall see you cry," said Lambertazzi.

Mario slowly lifted his eyes up to him; but he did not cry.

Lambertazzi pulled an apple out of his pocket. "That was well done," he said. "We must be friends. So we'll eat an apple." He broke it in two, and gave Mario one half, which the child ate with his blood-stained hand.

"Do you know now what the sword is for?"

Mario nodded, and went on eating.

"Tell me."

"To cut ourselves, and not cry."

"He's your son right enough, Law-Lady," cried Lambertazzi. He looked at the naked child, at the sword, the blood, then at the apple in his hand. "Climb down," he said. "Now think about it. We have shared an apple together, like two people who love one another. You have confirmed it with your blood. Now we have formed an alliance."

He gave the child back to Ravegnana, who said nothing about the blood. Then he looked at Muzio, who had stood near and taken note of everything.

"What are you going to do with him?" said Lambertazzi.

"I am waiting for the law of life to reveal itself in him," she said. "What his nature demands I give to him, if I can."

"He will be a soldier," said Lambertazzi, "that's what he'll be."

She staunched the flowing blood. "The two shall play together. That's my wish," went on Lambertazzi. "Now, Muzio, have you understood? Here's a little boy who cuts himself and yet does not cry. You don't cut yourself, and yet you cry just the same. You must even things up."

He beckoned to his bodyguard. Then they rode to the town. His child ran by his side.

When she reached home the Lady of Laws found a message from the old Galeazzo. Without it being known, he wished her Eminence to visit him during the quiet of the night. Gout prevented him from coming to her. "What is his lordship thinking about!" she cried. "And in his position?"

"What's the matter with you? It will be about Sfiga," said Aja. "As the matter stands he cannot inherit anything. It all goes to the government. So the Lady of Laws must again step in and save the crockery. It seems to be always our job when the Gierimei cart sticks fast. But the Lady of Laws ought to return thanks and say No. We had enough the last time. The taste of death is still in our mouths."

As she was speaking she looked sideways at Ravegnana. Nor did she take her eyes off her as she went silently through the room. Over the evening meal scarcely a word was spoken. At dusk she saw the Lady of Laws take down her red mantle from its hook.

"Ah!" she cried, "I guessed you would, you adventurous woman!"

Ravegnana looked down at her sideways as she bound on her girdle. She laughed, embarrassed. "Compose yourself," she said. "One must see a thing through to the end."





CHAPTER IX



IT was dark when she left the house. Her veil fluttered high in the wind. Theodore, her servant, accompanied her with a lantern.

They went through street after street, and crossed a deserted square where a spring gurgled in the darkness. Here in the daytime cart-drivers watered their horses before taking the high road to Ravenna. The light from the lantern flashed blue and gold on the running water.

Cats and lovers stole into the deep vestibules of the houses. They were the last signs of life, and soon all was left behind. Only the black heaven and the warm gusty wind remained.

The Gierimei castle loomed suddenly before them in the night. Houses, trees and bushes ceased, and they were confronted by an empty space a thousand feet wide which surrounded the building where the old man lived. A lamp, red as a grey-beard's failing eye, twinkled feebly through the darkness. Then the Lady of Laws arranged her garments—her veil, dress and cloak which flapped in the fitful gusts as she walked.

She was soon in the house. Women peered at her out of the darkness, then retreated. One of them conducted her through long corridors to Ser Galeazzo.

"Wait here for me," she said uneasily to Theodore in a low voice. The door of the hall was opened.

It was a tremendous hall, enveloped in obscurity, except where the old man sat in an armchair. Here an oil lamp on a high stand was burning. He was wrapped in furs. He beckoned to her, and excused himself for not rising. On his trembling hand shone a ruby.

"Come nearer, my most lovely one," he said. "Come nearer, that I may know it is you. My eyes are growing weak, but my fingers learn to see instead," and he reached out a clammy hand.

He took hold of her firmly with it, and touched her breast with the other. She broke away from him, and moved to the other side of the table.

"It is I," she said. "It is about your heir, I suppose. Surely the Bolognese notaries are not going to quarrel with one another over an affair that concerns Sfiga?"

"Yes," he said with indifference, "and we must cram the beaks of his little raven nestlings. I am counting upon the Lady of Laws. I tell you this plain. You are devoted to my house, though I cannot for the life of

me think why. Maybe for such a woman as Porta's daughter, devotion is natural when anyone is in misfortune. Perhaps that's the reason, and there is certainly enough to draw you here." With a hand which bore witness to his noble lineage he gently stroked his beard. "In these days," he continued, "to be known as a Gierimei is to get no assistance from the plutocrats of either Tuscany or the Romagna. A testament amongst us Bolognese is law and right, and yet nothing is binding with our tyrant. Everything belonging to Sfiga will be confiscated unless the two of us can stop it. Of course, I know that it really makes little difference, for Sfiga has no luck. But it must not be laid to the charge of Galeazzo that so much as two scudi of Gierimei money fall into Lambertazzi's hands."

She discussed matters, and found him a shrewd old man of the world, cold and full of knowledge. But she kept hearkening to what was really at the back of his mind. What could it be? Was it his money that he was so concerned about? But he was about to leave that. Or was it his house? In other words, was he concerned about Sfiga, who was the last representative of the male line? He had said himself that he did not believe that Sfiga's fortunes would improve. From their mother's side the children had Filippeschi blood in their veins, which had asserted itself very markedly; so she had often heard. The cool-headed Gierimei temperament had not been inherited by his descendants. One of them she had seen some years before, for Mona Maddalena in an outburst of maternal pride had dragged one of her children about with her for a whole week. Sfiga had happened to be away on military business, and Mona Maddalena had found life so monotonous that for once in her existence she had tried to act like a mother. No! These insignificant Filippeschi folk didn't interest the old man.

It is not Galeazzo, the individual, she thought, who calculates here at my side—though he does it with a keen eye. The hydra of his tribe stretches itself in the old man; it jerks his arm on this table, provokes these calculations; it fixes itself like a leech on to this property and on to the power of my will, knowing that in Sfiga and his children must its future be secured. The house trembles in fear, it is vanishing. Like a creeping plant it puts forth shoots, it throws out roots from its topmost branches to the ground, ever striving to prolong a life which does not belong to it.

"We can arrange it easily," said Galeazzo finally. "We can save everything. We shall draw up the testament so that the estate is divided into ninety-nine sums large and small, and scattered over half the Romagna. Ultimately, however, all is made over to you, Lady, and to the anony-

mous names decided on in the town of Poggio and elsewhere; it all comes into your hands. Then you will, for Jesus' sake or for your own, see to it that Sfiga gets possession. I suppose you are going to——"

"To Orvieto, yes."

"To Maddalena? If she had it, it would all be flung into the Reno, or squandered on Bologna fireworks."

"I will leave it with her brother, Baldassare."

"Why? He has already taken our children. They are of Filippeschi blood; it claims them again. No, you must give it to Valerio. Whatever he may be he is something of a Gierimei. We were always proud griffins, Madam. What we took we kept; see Faenza, for instance. Now everything is slipping through the fingers of the last of us, my nephew. Don't ask me how it has all happened."

Blinking, he looked at his lamp. It was growing dim; the wick was languishing. He put his hand under his chair, took hold of the oil-can, and replenished it. As he moved, his mighty frame heaved out of his furs. He was well built and very sinewy. Then he sat down again and gripped unexpectedly at her hand. Stroking it he drew it to him. "Let me," he said, "I shall soon be under the ground." His breathing was short and warm, like a child's. She felt it in her hair.

"Now then. You shall hear what a Gierimei thinks about it all, one of the Gierimei who has been through it for eighty years and now, more's the pity, can only think about it because he can do no better. . . What, Madonna! You are disturbed by this marionette devil's play of an old man? A man and a woman, both of such good sense, sit down together over midnight—for what? To talk about love—to *talk* about it? It's as if two eyes instead of looking wanted to start disputing how they look, as if the stars of heaven wanted to write a dissertation about light, instead of doing as God wills, shining and no more. But love—some of the Gierimei of my time have burnt with love. Through sheer strength and desire they have flung themselves so mightily on that thing called Life that not a single immediate descendant is left to them. What in the devil's name shall a man do, really? God pushes his nose on to it—Live! A man lives, and yet at the end he has nothing. Sfiga's mother, my sister, for example, and her husband loved one another, didn't they? Just consumed one another. Don't you understand?"

"They were wed. That was as it should be," said the Lady of Laws, and leaned away from his hot, short breath.

"As it should be? Not at all. Hear now how unnatural and wicked

are the spirits of life which govern man's entry into the world. Over the door which leads to the workshop where legitimate men are made has been written the cursed mezzoforte that would never come to our minds naturally: everything goes off with such a roar when we do what we desire. If we want to live together here, then we must cut off an arm, a leg, the half of all our organs. Marriage is an institution arranged by God and the devil in special conclave, so that the game may go on. It is their work. Every workman will tell you what work is from beginning to end: cold renunciation, self-denial, deep rooted in a sort of careful and deliberate stupidity, otherwise—O ye elements! He knows nothing of work who seeks his pleasure." He held her with an iron tenderness. "Husbands and wives who are faithful to one another are cannibals. I saw that long ago with us. But my sons," he went on, "O Madonna, they were right ones, such good fellows! the sort that Life gleefully chews up. Careless, out for joy, God and the world ran off them like water off oiled boots. And, of course, both perished in the Gierimei feud. But what a wife I had, also! She made me think of cabbage-turnip when I was with her, the only food that I detest."

"Good-night, Messer," cried the Lady of Laws and broke away from him, her whole body shuddering with the chill which came from the soul. "Good-night, poor Ser Galeazzo, happy Galeazzo, for you will soon be done with this sorrowful exile, and will taste the peace of God's heaven."

"Ah!" he cried in a long drawn-out breath. "But hear me out. Here I sit, my heart's blood frozen, sit by my lamp, alone in my distant Gierimei castle, and discuss with you my testament. And here," he went on, striking his breast with the hand on which the red stone glittered, "it burns. It burns here. It is as if a hundred living ones sprung from a thousand dead ones trampled here. Oh that I could begin all over again, to find better mouse-holes, better by-ways and defiles, and so come upon happiness. . . . By which I am suddenly reminded: Be so good as not to forget that I shall need very many and long masses for my soul." He laughed. "Believe me, Madonna," he went on, "one must get to my age and be a Gierimei to realise why in this country they put such huge stones on men's graves."

She went away and left this scorching old man to himself; but not for long. Very soon the women came tittering out of the darkness. Her attendant had believed that he was in a brothel.

As she went home the night was very late, a warm fitful wind blew

upon her and whirled her veil and mantle violently over her head. In the darkness she butted against people as they came lurching silently out of some side-way. Then something knocked Theodore all of a heap. The lantern was dashed down, and went out. There was the creaking of a saddle, and a flutter of attire and a horseman cursed and spurred up the street.

Ravegnana gripped her hobbling Theodore under the shoulder and helped him along. All the way home he cursed and swore at the dissoluteness of Bologna. "It is about time," he cried, "that these people realised that we live in the world for something more than a bit of copulation. When you go through Bologna at night you begin to doubt the whole seven sacraments."

The Lady of Laws thought to herself: "Here I am all alone with a scolding lame dwarf. Only God Himself knows what was intended when He let us walk together through the streets at night as a puzzle-picture for the Bolognese."

The old man died a year later. He left behind him the cellar of a German and the harem of a Saracen. But the women and the wine were soon disposed of. It was a case of wiping your mouth and going away, for, except for a few charities about which a clear will had been made, there was nothing there.

The Lady of Laws kept still until the thing was no longer a subject of gossip. Then a Franciscan monk, a conventual, who was going north on the business of his monastery, received a letter to give to Sfiga; and then some time after she asked the University for leave of absence. She wanted to take a roundabout route by Poggio, and then strike northwards. They knew that in the neighbourhood of Florence she had kith and kin, so the journey seemed quite natural.

"You ask where the unruliness of your child springs from," said Aja, chiding. "Madonna, I tell you, it comes from nobody but you. We needn't add an Apennine bandit to the stock. You should have been a man, but something went wrong, and you were left a woman. What? Whoever heard of a woman journeying across Italy? At such a time? About such a matter? A thing, I tell you, nobody will thank you for. But," she cried out, staring hard at her mistress, "you'll get your wages where you are going. God punish me if it isn't so. You are so fond of adventure."

The Lady of Laws laughed.

"And Lambertazzi? Haven't we had enough of him? Only let him get wind of this, and—"

"Yes."

"I used to think," said Aja, "that our son had got a mother, not a man in the house. Now I know that you're a man and not a mother."

On the day when she was to set out on her journey her boy was fetched to the house of Lambertazzi, which had already often happened. He went about with Muzio; Mona Clarice he didn't see, but now and then Lambertazzi.

The good-bye was short. On the threshold she kissed him. Then from the saddle she gave him her blessing. With every nerve and sinew of his body he strained towards his new friend. He did not sob and cry.

She had a quiet journey. Theodore came with her. She rubbed elbows first with clergy and clerics, then, when she turned northwards towards Poggio, she associated with merchants, who joined them on the way. One of them had just been on business in Orvieto. The Lady of Laws listened to what was being said, and learnt that the Filippeschi house was in mourning. Mona Maddalena was dead.

At once Maddalena in all her beauty and attractiveness rose up before her soul. She did not think of the children; they had lost no real mother. For Maddalena's husband she sorrowed little. It was of the dead person herself that she thought so violently. As she went into the inn to sleep she saw, as it were in the darkness, slender arms and black disordered hair tossing over a white face; the phantom bent over the bedstead, hips rocking and perpetual whispering, as it had been in days gone by. She wanted to kiss away every agonised word from the pale red lips. This affection came late. "Ah!" she said to herself, "I was born too old or too young to love anyone save God. Thus it has been decreed. But I don't know. What is it goes coursing through one's blood when one is older and stronger? It comes to me as if every day of my life I had perpetually set love on one side. The bud of my heart has been too tightly folded to break and blossom. But now I know. I can love with mighty strength and passion, even unto death can I love whatever may be thrown across my path. My heart is over-mellow with ripeness, the fruit ripens to the kernel. Ravegnana reproached herself bitterly and sternly that she had never known how to take Maddalena—as all beautiful things should be taken—with a feeling heart. For a feeling heart, if it inclines to beauty, instantly becomes like the holy monstrance, which, all-embracing, all-containing, places its sacred contents in an atmosphere of isolated sanctity and awe. For beauty, alas! dissolves too soon under the haze which it creates, it dissolves in the dark desire to partake of itself.

Instead of this, while Maddalena was under her roof she had regarded her too casually and indifferently, which attitude she now realised was a thousand times more annihilating than Sfiga's barbarism. And now, looking back on everything, she remembered the smiles which this beautiful woman had turned from Sfiga to the painter. Ravegnana's nature was in a ferment. Unhappy introspection made her hour upon hour absorbed in herself, thinking only of Maddalena. She gave way to a strange intoxication, and, torn by many perplexing, affectionate and trying emotions, her mind reviewed the qualities of the dead woman.

The sun had gone down; she left the inn, and descended the street. She rode through gardens and over hills. Up and down in the evening air flew the night moths; to and fro in their uncertain flight wheeled the bats.

Then she rested motionless, her hand on her heart, consumed by great pain. She ached over the lovely woman, and yet her feelings were not born of melancholy or mourning. Life seemed to come to a standstill, she could neither understand herself nor its whole. Everything she looked at was beautiful and clear—the sun over the field, and a stream which split into the blue twilight of the horizon. It called to her. In it she seemed to see Maddalena.

Praying on her rosary as she was riding, she was not really praying for the poor soul. For was it not all Maddalena!—the hill slopes which the eyes surveyed, Maddalena; Maddalena in every valley; Maddalena in the sound of the peasants' horns; Maddalena an impulse felt in her own body. Unendurable though sweet nourishment! It made her drop the bridle and lift her hands to Heaven. "Lord God, how much longer! Let me melt into Thee!" Like Saint Augustine she prayed on. "But not yet," she added. Here was death, and yet rebirth.

She had borne the soul of the dead; in all the fullness of her strength she had died and come to life again. But finally, after being carried away by love, dissolution, and emotions of every kind, came repose. The phantom was appeased and went away. It had drunk blood, and left its mark. So feed the dead. So they go, with blood on their lips, over the threshold of the underworld.



CHAPTER X

Or incqmincian le dolenti note.

DESOLATION and destruction confronted them as they drew near to the army headquarters. The road skirted a village burnt to the ground, and the Lady of Laws turned away her head. The next village, which had suffered in the same way, lay astride the road. So she had to go through it; she pulled down her veil. Then she felt ashamed, and began to look at all the wretchedness. She saw how the charred remains of the walls stuck up out of the ground in all shapes and forms; how the ruined beams and joists lay scattered; how the black swine grubbed among the debris for food. The travellers called each other's attention to one of the swine as it ripped open the stomach of a corpse with its snout, splashing its four legs with blood. Then the beast started after the riders in a lumbering gallop. They drove it off with their whips and it went back grunting to its carcase.

"O Italia!" said the man from Orvieto.

Then they traversed a stretch of country so infested with mosquitoes that the air seemed filled with reddish haze. For hours they followed a narrow road through marshland. Horses and mules went in single file, nose on tail. They filled the air with their pitiful neighings; and like an echo came the same sounds from other roads far distant, where peasants were driving heavily laden animals before them. They were hurrying out of the war zone with all their goods.

Away over the marsh the sun was smothered in a greyish red vapour. A mist rose up from the putrid earth. For years it had chiefly been used for bonfires and the burial of corpses; only solitary meagre patches had been dug and planted. The mist was foul and cold. Everywhere the elm and olive trees showed stunted growth. Disease had entered the sap, causing all new growth to turn inwards and curl round as if cramped, disfiguring the whole tree. It was appalling to behold. Thus might one imagine a plantation of Klingsor or Apone the wizard, who tried to cultivate life outside Nature in order to solve her mystery. At night, in the sleeping quarters, there were groans from every door. Half the company was down with fever.

Here the Lady of Laws took farewell of all save five persons with

whom she continued during the remainder of the journey up to the patriarchate. At the line of posts, which began three hours' journey beyond the marshland, she had to establish her identity. There she was shown the way to Sforza's commander-in-chief. A carriage awaited her an hour's ride farther on.

She rattled along through a country full of soft, spongy oaks of small growth and disturbing form. The whole neighbourhood was deserted; death had swept it clean; though now and then a troop of men would appear and march by like ghosts. Miserable faces cast evil and greedy looks after the disappearing carriage.

Then the road followed a long bank of filth which stank enough to foul the whole of Italy with pestilence to this day. On the top of the bank, partly solidified, partly shining wet, quivered a blue glittering veil. When the wind suddenly sprang up, the veil rose into the air and thousands upon thousands of blue-bottles darkened the sky. Many of them settled on the carriage; and hours afterwards the Lady of Laws found one of them in her dress.

The headquarters of the Sforza-Condottière was a half-demolished village scattered about in a few streets on the border of the territory, which lay before a chain of little hills. As they reached an angle of the road the commander's two-storeyed mansion suddenly came into view. Through the carriage window she saw the stone façade of a Gothic building. The roof was half-fallen in, for it was barely two months since they had taken the place by storm. A deformed mass rested threateningly on the beams over the second storey.

She ducked as she was going through the door, to the amusement of the officer escorting her. "One gets used to this," he said. "For us it will hold up long enough."

It was in a bare room she found Sfiga. Subordinate commanders glittering in gold lace and brocade, soiled plumes waving in their helms, approached the table at which he sat. At the same table a small boy was also sitting, drawing on sheets of paper with a piece of charcoal. Sfiga dismissed them all, nodding to the child to take his drawings and leave the room. Then he rose to meet the Lady of Laws. His hair had turned grey.

"So you have journeyed here in the midst of the war," he said. "Bravo. You help me to my own."

He led her to a high-backed chair, its threadbare cushion of straw-

berry-coloured velvet embroidered with chalices and lilies. It looked suspiciously like church loot.

She had been asking herself whether he already knew of his wife's death. She concluded that he did, because his child was now with him.

"You have suffered a great loss," she said.

Sfiga looked at her dubiously. She felt uncertain of her ground, and reflected what she should say next.

"Do you mean the old man?" he asked. "Or is there some misfortune regarding the property?"

All the despair she had already known again came to her. "Always the same note from the same person," she thought.

"Ser Valerio," she began again after a while, "I see this child is with you. I heard on the journey from people who came from Orvieto that——"

"What?" he asked rising. Her heart sank within her; she was dumb-founded.

He had walked to the window, and pulled down some cobwebs. "I am listening, Madonna. What has happened in Orvieto?" he said, still continuing what he was doing.

"Ser Valerio, I heard that Mona Maddalena was dead."

"Is that all?" he cried, turning abruptly towards her again.

The Lady of Laws stared at him.

"I mean—I know that. Is there nothing else?"

She shook her head.

"I know that; I know that," he repeated. He sat down in an armchair, one less ecclesiastic in appearance than hers, though not less suggestive of loot. It bore an impressive family coat of arms, with antlers.

"A blow," she began again, at a loss for words. "One blow after the other. Do you know how it happened?"

He leant back in the chair, his head just below the coat of arms, and drew his hand across his eyes.

"Why?" he said. "She is dead. That is the beginning and the end of the matter. God must have pity."

"Amen. You have lost a good wife," she said.

"Tolerable," said Sfiga. "A life like ours was not for her. At first, yes—she was a good wife as long as all went well."

"She loved you, man!" cried the Lady of Laws, and all her thoughts and feelings about the poor lovely creature as they had occurred to her on the journey came vividly back to her mind. "I can still see the sweet

child flinging herself upon you to cover you when you were stoned. I shall never forget it. She wanted to die with you."

"May be," he said. "To live with me would have been more useful. *Requiescat.*"

"Amen. Your son from Orvieto is here with you?"

"Not from Orvieto," he retorted. "And now, if it pleases Your Eminence, talk to me about the money."

They parleyed. A winding staircase which led down to the rooms below began to creak, and soon after a woman about twenty-five years of age entered. She was robust and full-bosomed, and she moved with a sort of laboured grace. There was an air of unreality in her interest, as if she were part of the plundered furniture.

"Later!" he said to her without raising his eyes from his calculations, at the same time scaring her off with a shake of his head. She looked at the Lady of Laws, and then went below.

Half an hour later the same woman reappeared, followed by a youth laden with linen and a heaped tray. She had put on a velvet robe of state flowered with a large pattern, and between her prominent white breasts a Venetian coin swung, dangling by a heavy chain from her neck. Sfiga again sent her away without interrupting his calculations. Her third appearance met with the same result.

"Supper for Madonna and me," he said finally.

"That young woman has been in action with me several times," he remarked to the Lady of Laws. "But this sort of life does not suit everyone."

It was late when they supped together. The woman soon found cause to reappear, bringing more home-fermented wine.

"Make the bed for Madonna," he said. She went.

Soon they could hear her bustling below. Sfiga left the table and stood leaning against the pillar between the windows, his hands in his hose.

"I struck lucky with her," he said, pointing to the floor with his wooden leg.

They sat over the wine and talked business. As darkness drew on Sfiga set a bronze candlestick on the table. Its dropping-dish embossed with a heavy wreath of flowers was supported by the head of an angel.

"Fine!" he said, as she gazed at the thing. "It is a piece of my best spoil. I seized it a year ago up here in the patriarchate of Aquileja. There were two of them, part of a dowry. I sent the other angel to Orvieto."

The Lady of Laws questioned him about life in the condotta.

"My friend," he said, "it is the same as anywhere else. It is half tolerable and half intolerable. My men are robbers, murderers and cowards, but when they see the chance of loot they are ready for anything. Sometimes they change their minds, and instead of going into fight they sidle off to the pothouse. Then there is nothing to be done."

The Lady of Laws asked him whether they had any sense of honour.

"Women," he said, "as I have suspected for some time, have a different idea of honour from men. They who bear arms in Italy to-day are all sorry folk. Misery does not beget a sense of honour; and I would point out that it is one of woman's delusions that honour is necessary to a soldier. His own life is what he loves most. The less cowardly of them I publicly embrace, telling them that they are heroes. Then sometimes a sort of frenzy gets hold of them, and you can lead them straight to the enemy if you understand how."

"They are the baser souls," said the Lady of Laws. Then she asked: "But how do you manage with your master, Sforza?"

"Sforza understands the game himself," he replied, "and he knows how to value a piece of work."

"Which means that you get well recompensed, Ser Valerio. God grant that peace is not far off."

Sfiga laughed. "Man earns the rod, Madonna, which peace prepares and the condotta gives. The moment I am ass enough to bring the campaign to an end, Sforza must trot out the money which he hasn't got, or give me land. What will he do? Invite me to Milan, and cut my throat. I don't make peace until half the Aquileian castles are in my hands. Then we can talk about it."

"A beautiful outlook," she said. "The whole country is a corpse. Will it always go on like this?"

He was surprised. "I'd rather it were Sunday and that I were sitting in my church pew in San Petronio," he said. "I'd rather be there, and folding my hands over my belly, believe me."

The Lady of Laws had a bad night. The fever which she had caught in the marshes started as the sun went down. In the house there was a continual coming and going. The air was stifling. Over her in the office Sfiga's wooden leg could be heard till long after midnight. Then the stairway creaked, a door closed, and Sfiga went to his substitute family.

At grey dawn she tried to get rid of the fever by breathing the morning air. It was very cold and the land was misty. Behind the house was

the garden, dirty, untended, the walls in ruins. Over a bed of stinging nettles a swing hung from two branches. Here apparently the child played. She pitied it.

She left the garden and went down the street. Then she turned back; for she had walked into some soldiers who were boorishly frolicking with a half-naked, drunken prostitute. She tried from another side and encountered a cesspool. So she decided to stand in the house doorway, but the ruined beams seemed to threaten a fall. Unwilling to go back to her stifling bedroom, she mounted to the office, and here on a table near writing materials and playing cards, near a wine bottle almost emptied and a candle burnt to a stump, she found a book.

She looked out of the window, over the level landscape covered thick with mist, away towards the northern hills. Then she picked up the book to read a psalm if it was a religious book, for it looked like it.

But she found that the contents were verse, not indeed Latin odes, but rhymed Tuscan. The lines were grouped in threes in the manner of the Latin verse of Brunetto. She had no inclination to read poetry, for the verse-maker Guittone occurred to her, his sirvente and his chatter. But she turned over the leaves and saw, where the book-marker lay, the sorrowful words:

*"nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria."*

She sought the context, and came upon the lamentation of the phantom as it whizzed through hell in the arms of a lover, it is true, but in heavy dream robbed of the strength and rapture of life. She read the adultery story, which fell like scanty drops of blood from the lips of the fair woman; she read and read, always the same. Her heart burned within her; for just enough consciousness of passion was left to her to enable her to perceive what her own dissolution would have been. That it was love, she knew; and, without having been loved, she herself experienced the sweet annihilation.

She turned back the leaves and on the first page read through her tears the name Dante.

Meanwhile the sun had risen; and soon after Sfiga entered. He saw the book in her hand, and an emotion passed over his face.

After this the ante-room filled, and the officer on sentry duty

appeared. There was a noise down below, for the carriage had drawn up in front of the door. She had decided to go back the same day.

After the breakfast which the woman brought in, and after several orders which Sfiga had given while she was eating—including a sentence of hanging—they remained alone, and he opened his account book. "A fine heritage saved. It is more certain than my children," he said, and shut it up. "At any rate, as matters stand they will be better reared with the Filippeschi. Life here is not for children. At least not for legitimate ones—which reminds me, what is your little son doing?" Then he stood up and took something from the chest. "Give him this from me. It is my christening present. I had nothing at the time to give him. Go away!" he shouted towards the door; and there were hurried steps down again. "She is like a raven when she spies something which shines," he murmured to the Lady of Laws as he returned, hobbling, a damascened dagger in his hand. "Give it him when he is old enough. It is always something safe and certain."

She took it.

Then he went on, looking round the room: "You, my dear friend, must have the best. But you have come down on me rather too soon. I had expected by the time you visited me to have got some more loot. Would you like the book?" He peered again round the room. "It is from some loot that wasn't worth much. Take it, it is a curious thing."

She didn't want to take it.

"Take it," he repeated, "I'll be glad to get rid of it. It is Dante's 'Inferno.' He was a learned man of Florence, who some years ago died in banishment in Ravenna. I read it because I wanted to know what hell is like. But he told me nothing new."

This was the moment to inform him that he must not send her stolen goods at Candlemas. But she couldn't do it. She took the book also.

Sfiga accompanied her to the carriage, and just as she was leaving asked: "Madonna, how are things really with you? You have again committed yourself to Gierimei affairs. If it should be dangerous for you——"

"Don't be concerned," came her answer. But he wasn't really concerned.

She drove away. For a short time she watched him standing under the overhanging ruins of the doorway, staring after her with dark sorrowful mien. But his trouble did not seem to come from concern for her.

She crossed the wall of dung and excrements, and passed the patch of ground covered with soft spongy oaks. The pale white sky was blistering the wilderness. She sat brooding in the carriage. Theodore, half asleep, swayed behind her, when suddenly there was a shock which made the horses rear, and the shafts split. The carriage leaned over and she fell with her veil across the driver, while Theodore was thrown upon her.

The soldier immediately jumped from the carriage. He examined the damage and discovered that the left front wheel had been broken. He took one of the horses out of the shafts and let it graze. On the back of the other he went off at full speed to headquarters to get another carriage.

The Lady of Laws went to a fallen oak which lay near, and sat down on it. It was soft as a cushion, rotten through and through, and rocked with her every movement.

As she rested there someone came out of the oak grove. She gripped at the dagger which had just been given to her; but suddenly, in spite of his great beard, she recognised Stefano.

"Your Eminence," he said, "I wanted to speak to you. That's why I played the fool with the wheel. All the spokes were well sawn through; the nave was as ripely rotten as the see-saw you're sitting on. I followed along behind you. I was hidden by the bushes. But the wheel held out longer than I thought it would."

"What does this mean? Why didn't you come to me at headquarters if you wanted to speak to me?"

"There was a reason for it," said Stefano, as with his sword scabbard he knocked away the heads from a squad of pale mushrooms growing near the fallen oak. "But don't think that we are not good Christians out here. The thing has been confessed, and as for me personally—I am absolved."

She waited.

"Which means really that the undying soul has been absolved. But flesh and blood are more sensitive in the matter. Could you believe it? I see it every night. Do you know what we did?" he went on as she sat there in silence. "The time before last when I was in Orvieto bringing money and things for my lord, I sniffed muck. You see my lord's wife was paying court in quite a strange way to a sort of friend who had run across her. He sang, played on the lute, and had the most gallant knights' books with him. O yes, such starry times! Not one of the Filippeschi said a word against it. They are a dissolute folk over there, Madonna. To cut

it short, I told my lord; and he finds that we have been dishonoured." Stefano knocked off the head of the last mushroom.

"Now," he went on, "my lord's war-wife had a black cat, which she made a great fuss of. Suddenly my lord said, 'Try it on that.' . . . So I administered the dose, and we both looked on. . . Well it gave one stretch and died. 'A right sign! The devil's own poison!' we said. All the hairs of the animal fell out afterwards; you clutched and got a handful. So I went back straightway to Orvieto. I hid myself and watched my lady. She had become such a wanton that she carried on the game in broad daylight—in a summer-house. I lay in ambush, and thought: 'When shall I give it to her? Before the paramour comes? Or just afterwards?' Thought out a double reason, an earthly and a spiritual one. First by theology: if I let her go on and sin deep it will certainly be better afterwards for my lord as well as for myself—but worse for her. Then the Eternal Judge will know exactly where he stands without hurting his head. Next the earthly reason—the poor woman will be able to get her pleasure first. So I left her to her pleasure. Then when the paramour had gone away and she was alone I stood there and said to her, 'Drink, madame. It is from my lord.'"

"For Christ's sake, cease!" cried the Lady of Laws, and drew down her veil.

"No, listen. Now comes the worst. It is terrible to take a woman's life. You don't know how to set about it. Take a woman's honour from her and it isn't so bad, whether she's a virgin or not. But take her life away and no one who has looked on can ever get the thing out of his head again. In short—but no, it wasn't short, it lasted a long time, while I consoled her so mercifully. 'It works quick,' said I. Indeed she wanted it. I had to tell her quite exactly how quickly it worked, tell her all about the black cat—everything. And as soon as she had put it to her lips she sat down, looked at the bed, looked through the window at the country and said, 'Oh! Oh! have you none that works slowly?' Now, your Eminence, that's the whole story. I hear those last words every night. But I've been absolved."

She was silent, her face covered.

Stefano looked round him. "If you want to say anything, Madonna, be quick about it. The man will soon be back."

"I am no priest," she said through her veil.

"No: what the priest had to say, he said. But what do you say?"

"So Sfiga didn't want you to tell me? And that's why you never came near me at headquarters?"

"Yes, you were to know nothing about it."

"Does the man think it would come out through me? What is he afraid of? Does he think that this miserable existence of his that I've seen him in here, this last degraded, ragged, tattered, filth-bespattered life he leads, might be put in danger? Is he trying to preserve that? Good God, who are we that Thou dost deign to look upon us? Does the man think, Stefano, that it would come out through me? I would spit his name out of my mouth if the devil by any chance ever wanted to put it between my teeth."

"Christ Jesus, Madonna," exhorted Stefano, disturbed by her wildness, "what then has my lord done that it is so unnatural? Did you expect that he would shield a bastard with his good name?"

"To kill the most lovely woman in the world! Why do you stare at me like that, man? Be so kind as to let go of my knees. I shall never tell anybody about your cruel villainy."

"O! that's not the reason. We've covered up our traces," said Stefano, gasping.

"How then?" asked Ravegnana, already benumbed.

"The thing is like this," he exclaimed. "They've got the murderer—no, don't imagine any crime, your Eminence; it all went in quite a Christian way. I mean, they've got the paramour. It was quite easy for me to prove that he did it. When I left Orvieto they had just put him to the torture—that of the third degree. Filippeschi was tearing his hair out to know how to bring the matter home to my gracious lord. But no! as regards that, nobody can prove anything against us."

"What? And the guiltless must die?"

"Is already dead, your Eminence. Not a tooth in his head hurts him any more. Hullo, what's wrong now? Why does that offend you? What are you concerned about? Guiltless? Do you know anything more shameful than adultery?"

"Oh, can't you see, man," cried the Lady of Laws, beside herself, "can't you see what an unutterable ass you are making of yourself by opening your beast's mouth and setting yourself up as a judge of crime and virtue? Yes, O heavenly powers, that's the way it goes on down here on earth. My dear Stefano, as we are talking about adultery, what about your lord, what is he doing?"

"He's doing what he can't help," said Stefano. "Why, Madonna, the

lousiest friar knows more about life than you do. Now don't be so unhappy about it. What am I to make of you? Do you mean to say you would acquit this good-for-nothing? Do you mean to say that you would let off this loafer, this sneaking peacock, this paramour from Orvieto, who is clever enough, and low enough, to get in when the lord of the house is away? And we who have to fight for a scrap of bread, we who by every morning and evening star are always in need, are we to be ranked with such a fellow as he? How then, think you, must a man live when he is campaigning?"

The Lady of Laws, who also didn't know, wrung her hands.

"There you are. But what help to us is hand-wringing, fasting, praying, flogging, and all such rumpus? We know that's no use, thank you. He who has any sense doesn't waste his time with stuff like that, but lives and goes right at things. By the skull of Saint Dominic, we live as we must. That we shall later on burn for it is all in order. But why burn here on earth, too? We mustn't try to be more godlike than God himself, think I."

He listened for footsteps. "Ecco, God bless your Eminence. A good journey. Greet Bologna from me."

"My child," she cried, "what have you done?"

"A silly thing, your Eminence—that's quite sure. Didn't my lord tell me that it was no proper thing for the ears of women? Now put yourself in a good mood. And as for myself, I'll get ease of mind without your help." He threw himself on his knees, kissed her hand several times, and sprang into the bushes. They closed again over his broad shoulders. She could hear them rustling as he moved off.

She journeyed on. As the new day dawned she came upon new devastation. The land was full of beggars. Crippled and leprous, they pointed to their mutilated limbs and corroded faces. They whined "*Miserabili*." And as near as they could they dragged themselves hobbling, stumbling, shuffling, and impeding the progress of the riders. The merchants who were moving on the road towards Bologna at first treated the rabble gently; then, when it became noisy, struck at it with their whips. The Lady of Laws, with clenched teeth and musing bitterly, gave them all she possessed. She had flung back her veil, as on the day she went through the wasted villages. Half asleep and half dreaming, with the even jolting of her riding, she mused thus: "All the world—from the church towers which dance on the horizon, over the crooked bushes straggling down the slopes by the roadside, from the bleating, pleading,

shuffling wretches hobbling on stumps and crutches and sitting on boards and cowhide rags, from the merchants who fill the air with chatterings about percentages, to Sfiga, Stefano, Maddalena—whether they are judged or pardoned, good or evil, free or enslaved, are just like a flock of ravens circling round one's head; they are all the same, all wretched beggars, crying out in perplexity against the Glory of God as it passes by in the distance."

As they came into the neighbourhood of Bologna a woman hung on the tail-end of the procession, young, indeed almost a child, covered with scanty rags. A naked baby was suckling at her breast, and she begged dumbly, her skinny hand stretched out towards the riders. Several small coins were flung at her, which, stumbling and running, an expressionless and crazy smile on her face, she grabbed out of the dirt of the road. But she came back again, came and stroked the velvet tunic of one of the riders, then the boot of another. "Get away. You have had your share," cried the most lavish of her benefactors, one who had already put his hand twice into his bag. Since she wouldn't go away and even got worse and gripped at his stirrup, every now and then stroking the velvet of his coat, he struck out at her with his spur and ripped the rags away from her shoulder and cut her skin open. She ran back with naked screaming breast. First she whimpered and kept away. But soon the naked feet could again be heard pattering, ever coming nearer, and with a crazy laugh she attached herself again to the favourite in the velvet coat. The Lady of Laws, who had no more money pulled her veil from her head, and bending down handed it to the woman. The wind tossed it softly across her naked breast and suckling child. "What, Madonna!" cried the man in the velvet coat, "the wretched thing has had more than enough. She had been worrying us for half an hour. What are you doing? 'Tis a damned fierce sun to-day. Take the thing back."

"Leave me alone; I don't want it any more," said the Lady of Laws.

The woman was delighted. First she twisted it round her head; but since, like that, she couldn't see what a beautiful thing it was, she pulled it down and let it flutter behind her like a sail in the wind. Finally she put it round her shoulders and wrapped her child in it—which action calmed her. Then as evening was coming on, she began to look about for a place where she could spend the night. The road was broadening, the mountains receding, and the neighbourhood of Bologna seemed to be near. Soon between hills covered with vines she caught sight of some ruins.

Many great blocks of stone had already been taken away to serve for new buildings. Stinging nettles grew between fallen mortar, stone and burnt beams were piled high; everything was rotted or made bare by a thousand falls of rain. Here had stood Sfiga's pleasure house. And here the beggar woman turned. For a long time they saw her climbing among the ruins and jerking up her naked feet as the nettles stung them. Stoop- ing low, with her eyes on the ground, she sought among the ruins for anything that might be serviceable to her.

As she looked, the tears of the Lady of Laws began to flow, trickling down her face. But the evening sun sparkled through them, making a thousand manifestations wherewith to gild and colour the scene of misery.

As the Angelus bell tolled she rode into the Ravegnana Street. Then, approaching her house, she met Lambertazzi on horseback, retainers with him. Tanned by wind and sun, she regretted her veil as she sat there on her horse.

"Law-Lady," he said pulling towards her. "What is Sfiga doing?"

But she did not answer; and he turned his gaze to the panel of a house doorway. There could be seen Jupiter hewn in stone, the lightning in his hands.

"Look," said Lambertazzi; "a singularity of the gods. They can hold the lightning fast until the moment comes to use it," and rode on.

"A sword is hanging over my head," she thought.





CHAPTER XI



FOURTEEN years had passed. The streets of Bologna still bustled with merchants, jurists, soldiers, students and women. For mankind in general, so long as the earth lasts, there will always be seed and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night. But for Italy in particular, so it seemed, there was to be just Guelf and Ghibelline for evermore. The old feud still continued. In Bologna it was maintained in the struggle between the Lambertazzi and the Gierimei. This was the order of the universe in terms of Bolognese, that strong idiom of the "sipa" which Dante did not disdain to use in the eighteenth Canto of his "Inferno." The Ghibellines were the tyrants, the Guelfs the dissatisfied party, represented at the moment by the Gierimei and their supporters. They were still powerless to do anything but sing their sirventes at evening parties. If we cannot do anything important, we decorate.

Meanwhile Gierimei conspiracies were continually brought to light. "My hangman," said Lambertazzi, "must live also."

Everything was as before. As the Angelus rang the Lady of Laws entered the Ravegnana Street. A student, his smooth black hair hanging over his ears from beneath his cap, was carrying her folios. His eyes were on the ground, and he was talking to her, his mother, as she walked beside him unveiled.

"Guarda la dotta," said two poor women who came up to her and kissed the hem of her cloak. In their hands were pots of steaming soup; and from their waist-bands dangled wooden spoons after the manner of the wandering Franciscans.

"Come, we must hurry, they are already dealing out the soup," said the Lady of Laws, quickening her steps.

She has grown into a powerful woman, but her mouth is small. As she is wearing no veil, one can see that the hair over her temples has turned grey.

The door of the Ravegnana house opened, and children with soup bowls in their hands came out and descended the steps. One of them promptly sat down on the threshold and began to eat it.

"You little animal," said the Lady of Laws, "have I not told you a hundred times that you must either eat it in my house, or wait till you

get home? Do what you are told, or that's the last spoonful you will get from me."

Away up the street you could hear the sound of mandolines between her chidings. A group of young folk were strolling towards them, their gay cloaks fluttering in the evening breeze. From under one of the cloaks came a squeal; a pretty girl had seen Ravegnana, and was trying to avoid her and run off. There was a scuffle, for her paramour would not let her go. In her view, it was not yet dark enough to be love-making; and they squabbled.

Then two of them went off with her, and soon they concealed themselves behind a screen of flowering bushes which spread from the wall. The third young man of the party, arrayed in gold, turned his steps in the direction of the house of Ravegnana. His cloak, glittering with gilded clasps and buckles, blew about him like an evening cloud. He took off his cap and ran to Ravegnana's son, crying, "Mario, my heart."

"Lambertazzi," muttered Mario to himself. He was embarrassed, as he always was in the presence of this young lord; and in the confusion of the moment he threw down the heavy volume of *novellæ institutiones* which he was carrying.

"Hullo, Mario, my heart, a sign! You throw the Roman law at my feet. I will be industrious, yes, I will—from to-morrow."

He bowed to the Lady of Laws. "To-morrow, Madonna," he said, "I return to the University without fail."

Meanwhile, people with their bowls ready, had collected at the other side of the house door. They did not venture to go in, but looked at the ruler's son, nudging each other and whispering.

"Go in," said the Lady of Laws, "there is no need for the whole street to be entertained because there are a few plates of bean soup here."

Young Lambertazzi laughed. The door stood open, but each hesitated who should enter first. The Lady of Laws settled the difficulty by pushing the poor folk on ahead.

In the deep vestibule was dimly reflected the green of the garden. Behind a huge saucepan appeared Aja, old and bent. Clouds of steam rose up, enveloping her. With a heavy ladle she was pouring the soup into the bowls held out to her. Her clean-cut face disappeared and reappeared through the clouds of steam. Theodore lined up the poor folk silently pressing and squeezing towards the saucepan.

"Look there, Mario, my heart," said Muzio, leaning on his friend, "picture this bundle of rags dancing round the witches' cauldron at the

crossroads at midnight—what a case for the Inquisitors, eh! O Madonna, how picturesque is charity!”

The Lady of Laws had taken off her red mantle and put on an apron.

“Does this give your mother joy?” enquired Muzio.

Mario made no reply, so he turned to her. “Does it give you joy?”

“Not so much as it should do,” she answered in a subdued tone, so that the people should not hear.

“Why not?” he asked.

She did not reply; she was so busy ladling. But Mario answered: “My mother gets no joy of it because she likes offering what she has to individuals instead of to the crowd.”

“But Mario, my heart,” cried Muzio, “I have studied this subject in theory, in a general sort of way, under Pater Vincentio. Now—what was I going to say?—the more you do the more praiseworthy you are; so it seems to me.”

“And the less you do the more human you are,” said Mario.

“What do you mean?” asked Muzio.

“We mean that you cannot live with the multitude. That’s a task for the Cyclops.”

“My father can,” said Muzio.

“O yes,” said Mario, in a tone of respect mingled with scorn. “Now we understand each other. He rules. I was talking about living.” He moved to Muzio’s side; then added, so that no one else could hear: “And as for my mother, she is even too many for herself.”

The young Lambertazzi watched the Lady of Laws as she steadily scooped and poured. She looked at each person as she gave to them; her gaze passed from one to the next, and so down the whole row.

“Why do you do it?” asked Muzio.

Without interrupting her work, she made a movement with her head as a signal for him to come nearer so that the poor folk should not hear what she said.

“Have mercy on me,” he said, sticking his head into the steam. “Through the mere nourishing smell of it, I shall want no more food for the next three days. Now tell me why.”

“Because it must be done,” she answered.

“How good you are!” he said.

“No,” she replied, “for St. Paul said: ‘And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.’”

"What is to keep you from loving these people?" asked Muzio.

There was no answer. She continued ladling.

Muzio threw back his head and said: "I don't know,—but I have studied this subject in theory, in a general sort of way, under Pater Vincentio. If one does bestow charity, why can't it be done wholeheartedly? We are all human beings, says my Pater."

"Unfortunately," she replied.

"Good," he said. "This admitted, what prevents you from loving these people; they are your fellow creatures?"

"My child," she answered, hooking the ladle on the edge of the great saucepan and turning to him, "so long as I draw on my mere human nature, No. Could I but truly love them out of the wealth of my spirit, Yes. . . . But enough. I see that you are again occupied with vapouring philosophy, and sound as if you are seriously thinking."

"Yes, there's no denying it," said Muzio, "that once I set foot in the Ravagnana house I get to fundamentals."

With a smile of sweet uncertainty his gaze wandered off, as if seeking a way out and beyond the wretched figures there, away towards the saffron-coloured skies.

"Mario, my heart, come out of this hole," he cried suddenly. "I want to tell you something." He led him down the steps to the garden. With arms on each other's shoulders they strolled off, and disappeared in the green foliage.

An old woman, holding out her bowl, jostled against the Lady of Laws. "Madonna," she said, "this young gentleman is nothing but a rake."

"Eat, and don't slabber," said the Lady of Laws.

"But good advice is payment from God," replied the old woman. "I give it you in exchange, for I have nothing else. Look after your son."

"Look after your son?" The Lady of Laws pondered the words as she mounted to her room, where her red mantle lay thrown across the table. Then she watered the blue flowers in the pots. But her thoughts were elsewhere.

From time to time she watched Mario walking up and down between the green bushes with his richly clad companion. He was listening attentively while the other talked. He walked meditatively like a monk, his black hair hanging straight from his lowered head, his hands thrust into his leathern girdle. After a frolicsome childhood, this calmness had steadily grown on Mario as his mind developed. Since he began to study, the outward and material things of life had become incidental to him.

He could scarcely be roused to a moment's excitement even when, as once happened, his elegant friend raged at him. But this quiet mentality contradicted his natural outward strength. He was a healthy fellow, robust and thick-set. His mother tried in vain to see in him the lank, yet fine-jointed, figure of old Porta. The forces of his soul and body, still vague and unexpressed, were born of the dark Apennine night. Things strange to her own qualities were marvellously mixed in him. His composed and audacious mind would certainly far surpass hers once it was set firm in maturity. Yet Ravegnana recognised the faint outlines of his character in herself. She began to understand the goal towards which her own spiritual nature had striven, and saw how to develop in her son the best fruits of the family tree. For mature souls it is salvation to forsake the uncertain detachment of one's own being. "He must increase, but I must decrease," said the Lady of Laws to herself, as she contemplated in rapture the wonderful beauty of the fading evening.

But yet what did that mean?—"Look after your son." It would be the first time such a thing had occurred to her since he had grown up, she thought. But her hands were not made for tight holding. She went easy with him, was doing it at the present moment. Like a dancer trying her limbs, watching them closely, watching the play of their powers, so she studied the stirrings of her heart. But it was in no way convulsed. She believed that she saw in his every movement the composure of a tractable soul.

She turned to the little bookcase near the crucifix, took down a breviary, and read from it. She was now spending most of her time upstairs; the little room was her bedroom. Bed, table, chair, a crucifix and the blue flowers of the window were in the room as they used to be. Year succeeded year, and the things in the house increased in number; coverlets, pictures, lamps, candlesticks, and books grew more and more. But always she found some sort of a nook or corner, where she could put them—where she could wedge them, hang them, stand them, lay them. Gradually, in this way, a house puts on a stuffed-out appearance, reminding us of a corpulent person of between forty and fifty. Each year things came to this house of Ravegnana; her students gave to her, and ever faithfully Sfiga sent articles from his loot, which she put in the chest. But she bought nothing herself for the house, rather would something disappear, and a blank space on the wall or on the wooden floor mark its absence.

It was the same with the books. At first Ravegnana had collected

them; after that she arranged them; then she selected. She noticed that the mind outlives many books. They stand idle, shells sucked dry. The contents have been absorbed; which means that they have changed. From a crowd of conceptions which her strong memory retained, her brooding mind squeezed a rule, a law. That dissolved; but from its remote background she extracted psychic energy and activity. Such remained, and quivered with lightning intensity through every actuality of life, experienced or only recognised. One by one the books came into the hands of Mario. He was a beginner; he heaped them up with joy. He thought he had won riches when she gave him a book. But she thought of everything she gave as a gift to herself, because such an action strengthened her spiritual life. The book belonged to her when she pushed it from her. What did she want to possess more vital than herself? It was her aim to reject the Ego called the Lady of Laws, and to set free Olimpia di Porta Ravegnana, because all that name stood for had been lost in a sounding title, behind which the background of the mind, a world of eternal and ordered working, had been reduced to a mathematical formula. To her there was one book above all books. It held her like the spirit of the Earth, which nevertheless with great sweeps of its pinions drags everything confided to it into an unearthly atmosphere. This was Dante's "Inferno"—put into her hand by the hand of misfortune and crime. "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," says that writing of superhuman emotion and passion. The brave pilgriming spirits stood in a circle round her heart, and she found that they were more real and intimate to her than many actual human beings.

Her outer life ran parallel to her inner. The Gierimei had made a goddess of her. When her old friend the Magnificus died, his place was taken by a like-minded Jurist, a man of the school and leaning of Accursius, a pupil of her father, an avowed Gierimei, one who also respected Guelf traditions, as was the case with all the learned men of Bologna. A few years later they made her Charity Administrator, and she knew quite well why. The Gierimei knew quite well from whose hand their defeated chief had received his inheritance. Lambertazzi knew it, too, but let year after year pass by, let the woman go about as if nothing had happened, and never prosecuted her for treason, or fraud, or whatever name they might like to give it. "A singularity of the gods; they can hold the lightning fast till the moment comes to use it." He was not the god to let loose the lightning merely because it pleased him. He sat tight in his fortified palace, and governed very cunningly, sternly

and cruelly, as was expected from a Lambertazzi. One daughter after another was born to him; what pleased him more, he was able to make good alliances with the governments of the towns of the Romagna.

But Mona Clarice each year was so exhausted that for a few weeks she went to the cloister of the Clarissa nuns. Every time she bore a girl she was given a thrashing and renounced married life. But after a month she found the cloister still worse, and towards the summer went back to the Lambertazzi palace where her life continued as before. Punctually next spring she bore her girl-baby and received her thrashing, and went back to the Clarissa nuns to finish her altar coverlet. As the years passed Lambertazzi grew accustomed to both her embroidery and her baby-girl, upon which he began to cast fleeting looks of goodwill. For the rest, so far as the family was concerned, his thoughts rested on Muzio, for whom he engaged as many tutors of widely divergent views as there were schools of learning in Italy. From each one Muzio chiefly learnt that his predecessor was an ass; with which judgment Muzio agreed. While Muzio emphasised this, he inwardly wished that the next tutor would arrive so that the present one might be so judged.

Her office as Charity Administrator brought Ravennana more and more into contact with the poor of Bologna. Three times a week a great saucepan of warm food was prepared in her house; and in the evening the poor people came for it, receiving also from time to time an article of clothing. Mario learnt to help; learnt from Aja and his mother to tackle everything, to feel disgust at nothing and to put thoughtlessness and querulousness away from him. Thus good works were made a regular feature of his life. The Lady of Laws did everything because she had to; but none of it gave her any joy; it was always as alien to her as on the first day.

"Mother," said Mario to her about it when he was a little child, "when you get to heaven, God will praise you very much, won't He? What will you do?"

"Hide my face," she answered.

"Why? I think because God does good Himself He wants *us* to do good."

"Yes," she said, "if you do good as He does good. If you can make your good works dance and rejoice as the stars in heaven dance and rejoice, if you can do that!—Ah! everything is dead, dead and very strange."

Later on as he grew older, when he began to exercise and take pleasure

in his powers of controversy, strengthened in this by his friend Muzio, she would look silently at him as she listened to his chatter. He tried to move her to join in his mockery and share his scorn. But no word of censure escaped her; he had to mock alone.

"Mother," he would say, "why do you make everything out to be good?"

"Because God always does everything well."

"But many things are not as God would have them."

"That is true."

"Then," he cried out, "we must get to grips with things."

"Oh, how I would if I could," she said, "but I try, and do what comes first."

"Of course; we do what comes to our hand."

"Something," she said, "has come to my hand. Until I have quite finished with it, I must do nothing else."

"What is it?"

"My heart."

"Look after your son." She stood by the window and mingled the words with the words of the breviary. "He grows in the light of my eyes to what he must become. I may do no more and no less." She watched him there, standing below, watched him hesitatingly put his hand into Muzio's, saw him look up silently and shake his head, then take leave of his friend.

She went away from the window.

"Good-night," said Muzio under the window. "So you won't join with me? But isn't her little sister Petronella also a mighty sweet animal? No? Then good-bye, and sleep well, O Mario, my heart! O Night, O Spring, O Life—by everything which overflows, I take my oath that you are the loveliest little milksop."

Mario started, but did not draw back his hand.

"Bravo," cried Muzio, "you let me say that."

"It is your opinion only," replied the son of the Lady of Laws.

Muzio laughed. "And it isn't yours?"

"I prefer to wait till danger comes of itself," said Mario. "If I must compel people, I prefer to compel men. There is no amusement in compelling weak lasses."

Muzio fell laughing and kissing on his neck. "Devil, what a sweet, serious little fool you are. But tell me; you won't betray me, will you?"

"To Eternity, never."

"That's fine of you. Think of me in bed. What are you going to eat to-night?"

"It is the day of the poor. We eat the same as they."

"Pestilence, you poor man. Why?"

"Because my mother says that there is no charity if it is not felt."

"Indeed," cried the handsome young man. "That precept was not advanced by Pater Vincentio to the house of Lambertazzi. That is no doubt because he eats at our table. Good-night. Look at me closely; it is the last time."

"The last time?"

"Yes. From to-morrow I shall be another, and follow a life of virtue like you, Mario, my heart. It makes you so delightful that I also must try it. Do you understand? Only arrange that virtue is not so terrifyingly boorish, and we poor slaves to vice will not delay flinging ourselves headlong after you. And so we will cheat Hell. Good-night."

He sang:

*"Or me bassa, oclo meo,
E tosto sia l'andata."*

Later in the evening Mario helped his mother with the flowers. He was very silent, and said "Good-night" to her as if depressed in mind, while the moon rose up, and the rose bushes showed like dumb brocaded ghosts under its light. In his little room she heard him tuning his lute. The strings all at once moved together—he had made a sudden abandoned pluck. Then all was still.

The next day there were movements and mutterings in the streets of Bologna, sounds of something shocking, yet sounds of triumph. But the halberdiers appeared, and the crowds dispersed from the streets into the houses. Ravegnana had to give a lecture, and in the afternoon had to carry out long trusteeship negotiations and pay two visits to the poor quarters of the town down by the river Reno. She heard and saw nothing. As she reached home she met Aja who brought news. "Tell me to-morrow," she said with a gesture, and went up the steps. At the same time, Mario brushed dejectedly by.

Later on, when it was dusk, she took two yellow roses and put them in glass vases near the window; then by candle-light she read through her lecture for the following day, closed the manuscript, and, pulling at the

laces of her clothes, was just going to unfasten them and get into bed when a moth, very softly, without beating its wings, flew through the candle flame, and sank fluttering on the table before her. The pretty creature quivered in her hand as she picked it up and put it into the roses where dew and sweet scents might cool it and restore it from its fright. As she was doing this, the house door went, and strange and sombre voices spoke in low tones. She came on to the staircase, shielded the light with her hand, and bent over the banisters saying, "Who is there?" A cap was lifted up, and Lambertazzi, his face white, walked up the stairs into the ring of light thrown by the candle. "Wait," he called over his shoulder, drew her with him, and shut the door.

The Lady of Laws was astonished. Still more was she astonished when in two strides he crossed the room and pulled away the curtain from the opening to the bedroom. Disturbed in mind she followed with the candle. The cover of the bed was drawn back, but he did not look at it. He turned back to the room-window, making only one or two steps to it, for the room was narrow. Then he looked round him and said: "Here, I know, Valerio Sfiga once lay." He turned back to the window. Panting he muttered, "O God, O God, O God!" as if shaken in mind.

"Has something happened?" she asked.

"Something happened?" he repeated. "Don't you know?"

"No." It troubled her dreadfully that she should have to force him to tell her what was causing him such distress.

"O God," he cried, "my son!" He stood in front of her, and tore at his hair. It was still quite black.

"My son! My one dear child, Muzio. Where are you?" Then in a changed voice, he added: "If only I get him back, I'll flog that carrion-bird to ribbons. I vow it before all Heaven. But who will bring him back!"

She tried to make him sit down; but he fumed away from her hands.

"My son," he said, "to make the story short, visited a Gierimei maiden last night—only the devil knows if it was at the desire of this carrion or not. She says he raped her. Do you understand—raped! They all say the same after they have had their pleasure. But the Gierimei took him by surprise, and, to shame me, they flogged him. Then they locked him up."

"This scandal ought not to be made known," she cried. "The Gierimei house must listen to reason. Who was it?"

"But at early morn," he went on, "the room was empty. Oh, Muzio, my son, my child! . . . What a jump he made! Oh, what has befallen him? Where is he hidden? Blood on the bushes under the window.

Blood on the wall. Blood in the street. That's all I know. Where are you, child?"

The Lady of Laws stood deeply moved. But she asked herself, nevertheless, why the man had come so late in the evening to tell her all this. Perhaps, she thought, although I am no Gierimei, he wants me to approach the party to do something. "Can I help you?" she said. "You may trust me."

On these words he rubbed his hand over his forehead, flinging back the hair damp with sweat, and stared into her face. She was still carrying the candle, and by its light she saw his eyes as if they were black holes. "What do you want to do?" he cried wildly.

"To help you," she said.

For a few seconds he remained standing with his mouth open, then he crumpled up before her. She shrank back terrified as he dropped heavily, believing that in his excitement and fear the blow had deranged his wits. She wanted to go and call for help, for she felt him clutching at her knees, felt his weight against her, pressing against her thighs. His face was lifted towards her. His eyes, two holes deep and black, seemed to try to engulf her soul.

"Ravegnana," he said, and began in broken speech to oppress her. "It is on account of my father-confessor. He is a Guelf dog, I know. And an enemy of the nobles, I know. But what does it help! They are all that. This Father Vincentio imposed it on me—to-day, after dinner, as he was with me in my state-room. Cursed joy for the Guelfs! But he is the mouth-piece of God. That can't be forgotten. Heaven will not restore my son until I confess. I shall have no more fortune, says Father Vincentio, till I have done this penance. The reckoning must be paid in full, mustn't it? O God, God, God!—haven't you got anything?" He broke free, licking his dry lips. "Haven't you got a drop of wine? Nothing has gone into me all day."

She went into the next room, and came back with wine and a piece of bread. He took them from her hands moistened his lips and put them near him on the floor.

"Forgive me, woman."

"What?"

Then he clutched hold of the goblet and drank. But he was trembling so violently that some of the wine was spilled.

"*Forgive me your son,*" he said.

A dreadful flash of light burst upon the Lady of Laws, revealing every-

thing. She leaned against the jamb of the door. Then a great wave of shame passed over her body; it flooded backwards over her whole past life and forward up to that moment. It mounted up to heaven, then thundered down stifling her breath, leaving her blinded, stupefied, stunned, flung earthwards. And through this experience of inexpressible humiliation, this shameful experience which brought back to her mind every step which she had made through the Bolognese streets, her soul spattered with sticking, stinking mud till she was pushed into the very depths, through it she heard a voice in her soul ask "Is that all?"

"Leave me," she said aloud.

"Forgive me," said his voice against hers, and the words of each of them seemed to cross one another several times, just as two duellists, both wounded and at bay, still strike at one another without doing further hurt.

"Leave me alone, man," she cried. "How can all this help us?"

"You put a curse on me. From the beginning didn't you put a curse on me, Lady of Laws? Put a curse on the father of your son? And you will still curse him?" He questioned, he babbled, pressing ever closer against her, his chin against her knees.

I have never cursed you, and will never curse you. Now, I pray you, I command you, to obey my desire and get away from my sight."

On these words, that she would not curse him, Lambertazzi stood up. He rubbed his sleeve over his forehead, cleared his throat, and sat down at the table. "Good," he said exhaustedly, "we've got so far." Then he bent assiduously over the bread and wine, gulping them down.

She stood there with her hand over her eyes and signalled to him to go.

"You forgive me, woman," he said, "surely you will forgive me? Have I, tell me, done anything to you all these years? No, nothing at all. You sheltered and healed Sfiga. You retained the duties of your office. You removed the Gierimei inheritance from Bologna. Did I do anything against you for it all? No, I did nothing against the mother of Mario. And at the end of it all, as the son must have a father, why shouldn't it be Lambertazzi?"

She made a movement with her hand. "Get out," said her gesture.

"Gently, gently," he cried. "It happened a long time ago. Was it really we? To me it is as if our ghosts wrought that miracle on the hill that night. Why are you still so ashamed?"

"I beg you to go," cried the Lady of Laws beside herself. She felt as if one piece after another of her body were being torn away. "If only in the

name of Christ you would go away. What sort of a world am I living in?"

"Hell and the devil, woman," he said, "you are living in the usual one, where we must grow accustomed to surprises."

When he had said that he flung his cloak round him and went and stood at the room window and resolutely stared at the dark sky. "I have done my share, O Lord! It is Thy turn now," he seemed to be saying. Then he went away. But he stood still in the next room, and then returned to her. She received him indignantly.

But he gripped her hand and laid it on her breast. "You pure heart," he said, "ask yourself, listen to yourself—shall I get him back again?"

"As far as I know, yes," said the Lady of Laws. Her voice sounded weak to herself. The picture of Mario flew like mist before her soul, the anxious Mario as she had seen him that day and the day before.

Lambertazzi went away, and a draught of air put out the candle. Then the moon lit up the room. She went to the window, and saw the roses standing in its shimmer. Almost without thinking, she looked for the burnt moth. But it had gone. The fear of death had driven it into the night. A stream of thoughts rushed down upon her, and swirling round and round, howled about her ears, and pressing on her brain sought to enclose it in red-hot narrow walls. She leaned out of the window. "Let them come to me later. Yes, as long as I live I shall never be free of them. God's mercy! Must it all be to-night?"

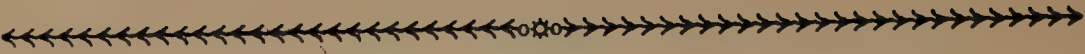
Then she went out into the coolness. "Are you asleep, Mario?" she called up to his window.

"No, mother," he replied.

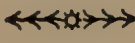
"Put something on. We will walk in the garden."

"I am still dressed," he answered. "I am coming, sweet mother."





CHAPTER XII



ONE afternoon of the following week the Magnificus burst into the lecture room and informed her Eminence that Lambertazzi was there. She found him waiting in the library. He had banged down a volume containing Boëthius' "Consolatio Philosophiæ," had done it so hard that the leather binding cracked. The librarian was pained; and Lambertazzi waved to him to withdraw.

"I go round and round in this Bologna of mine like a mouse in a trap," said Lambertazzi. "Do you know where they say my son has gone, the God-forsaken fellow?"

"Yes," she wanted to reply, but he anticipated no answer and continued: "North towards Verona, as far as we can track him. What now if my ill-luck arranges that he falls into Sfiga's clutches?"

"My ill-luck," were the only words she heard. They left a strange impression.

"It is incomprehensible," he said, "how things are now going against me. And a youth who has had the most expensive preceptors, there were a full dozen of them! By heaven, my cup is full. If he has fled, why should he go towards the pest-ridden area? Why should he go to the commune of Treviso where Sfiga bivouacs? Every report makes it clearer that it is there he has got to. Damnable! damnable!"

"We can do nothing but wait," she said, and would have continued but he interrupted.

"The devil made that word. Now where is Mario? I hear he has got leave of absence. What for?" he asked.

"He has gone after Muzio," she replied. "He knew about his strange action, and he knows where your son will go if it fails. He confided in me one evening."

"What?" cried Lambertazzi. "You allowed him to go? Are you mad? For isn't it dangerous?"

"For that reason I let him go," she said. "If they fall into Sfiga's hands, my son has a credential, a christening present from Sfiga himself. When he sees that he will take pity on Muzio—if I know him rightly."

His eyes betrayed the conflicting emotions that stirred by turns within him. He seized his barret. "Well," he said, "that's Christianity at any rate, if nothing else." The Lady of Laws shrugged her shoulders. He left.

The following day the same thing occurred; Lambertazzi was again announced. She was displeased and decided to leave him to his volume of Boëthius until the lecture was finished. But the new Magnificus stood waiting for her at the door of the lecture room. He was a person in whom she found nothing compatible. He had dingy grey hair, spying eyes, and a slack mouth. His aloof life was revealed in his colourless, expressionless face. She went with him, lest he should suspect. Again Lambertazzi asked: "Have you heard anything?"

"No," she said.

"Nor have I," he returned. "Let us go outside; these dusty old books stifle me."

She had to walk with him through the small quadrangle garden, where the bees droned in the aconite, and the butterflies like small white clouds rose from the jasmine and sank on to the wild roses.

Here after a brief silence he asked: "Does Mario know?"

She nodded affirmatively.

"What does he say?" he said.

"Sir, if that is all you want—I am in the middle of a lecture," she replied and stood still.

His eyes flashed.

"As Mario is my son, I am entitled to know how he accepts the fact," he said.

"You see that he is doing what he can to help Muzio," she said.

"I want to know," declared Lambertazzi, his face glowing red with fierce emotion, "what he says to the fact that I am his father."

The blood mounted to her head also. "I have told him," she said, "that a circumstance prior to his birth should not concern him. He must accept it as we accept the sidereal hour in which we are born. Accept it as something elemental, no more, no less."

After a long silence he asked: "How did you answer him in his early years?"

"He never asked," she said.

"He must have asked," said Lambertazzi.

"I repeat, he never asked," she replied. "At first it was as if a guardian angel watched over him. Then someone called after him 'bastard.' I thought he was going to ask me what it meant, but something sealed his lips. Then he reasoned out for himself why other children had a father and he none."

"How then?" said Lambertazzi.

"He answered the question himself," she replied.

"Told himself that his father had died," suggested Lambertazzi.

"No," she said, "he found the answer in Ovid. He read of Io, Semele, and Latona, and came to his own conclusions."

"Ecco!" cried Lambertazzi. "Did he think it was Jupiter?" They had reached the covered walk. "I have a lecture," said Ravegnana leaving him. Two of her colleagues watched her and exchanged conjectures. Lambertazzi stood alone in the full glare of the mid-day sun.

When she was at home one evening, her restlessness urged her into the room which opened into the garden, and in which was her son's bed. She walked up and down in it and then opened one of his books. A note twanged loudly from the wall. She was startled. A string from his lute had snapped. "An omen?" she asked herself. She sat down upon the bed, pulled back the blanket and kissed the pillows. Then she heard Lambertazzi coming to her again, driven to her and to her alone in his fears. "Has he not his wife?" she thought. "What will the town be saying?"

He flung open the door, shouted to someone to wait outside, closed it again, and planted himself in the middle of the room.

"Ravegnana," he cried, "at last I have heard. Keep calm. Sit down. I have something dreadfully painful to tell you. Mario is dead. I heard all from the Senator Bonagiunta—died of the plague, I guess. Do you remember what I told you when I first heard of your foolhardiness in sending him off? From everywhere come reports of the plague—from Verona, Treviso, Castelfranco, and even from Parma. The land is black with bodies. They lie like dead flies, and they rot where they lie. The living lift no finger to bury them, but get quick away. Bonagiunta has just sent me the news by word of mouth. Told me about the plague and the young fellow's death, nothing more than that. The man he sent with the news arrived sick himself. Seemed to me rather muddle-headed, and we sent him off straight to the hospital to be disinfected. This pestilence is coming nearer, God help us. I know nothing more. But I shall soon have my Muzio back again."

"Go," said the Lady of Laws with difficulty, "it is late." He drew near to her, watching her bend low over the pillow. Suddenly she became conscious of the scent of Mario's hair, left there in the pillow. She rained kisses and tears upon the bed.

What to say he did not know; and touch her he dared not. Her heart melted away. "O that I could be dissolved into thin air and briny water that I might gently descend as the dew upon my child where he lies

dead!" she moaned. Then Mario seemed to be there before her eyes again, tangible, in all his wonted strength and seriousness of mien. She could not believe him dead. Her heart was convulsed within her. She felt her heart like some living thing, yet not part of her, a mouse, a bird. Again, as in his childhood, she saw a bird held fast in Mario's hand. She heard his deep voice say, "But I won't hurt it." And as her tears flowed it was as if her heart were this bird; but held fast in the all-embracing hand of God. His voice was saying to her, "I won't hurt you."

Then another voice spoke, a human voice. "Ravegnana," it said, "if one of the two had to be sacrificed, believe me, it is better so. Mario would have found the disgrace of his birth more and more unbearable. Let us be reconciled to what has happened. What had your son to look forward to? Think. What career is there for one so born? It is better so. The mercy of Heaven perhaps. Better for you, and better for him."

She let him talk. Clearer and more real to her was the sweet voice which said, "I won't hurt you."

As she neither wept aloud nor spoke to him, he bent down and took hold of her by the shoulders. She fell upon the bed again, covering it with her kisses, as though her child lay beneath her.

Lambertazzi could find nothing more to say. So he turned to go. "Sleep," he said with a sigh, "and forget. Time must bring healing. You asked for this trouble. Who told you to send him after Muzio? I did not."

His hand was already on the door knob, when from the darkness of the garden outside a face appeared at the window, and a voice cried, "Mother."

At the sound of this voice the Lady of Laws sprang up as if the resurrection of the dead had been trumpeted. With outstretched arms she rushed to the window. It was Mario. Before he had time to enter she clasped him to her heart. He sat astride the sill, one leg in and one leg out, with his arms about her neck. Their tears mingled as she overwhelmed him with her kisses. They clung together, lip to lip; they were as one person.

Then Mario caught sight of Lambertazzi and climbed right through. But he could not and would not free himself from his mother's embrace. He held her head pressed against his shoulder as he took a step towards Lambertazzi and looked up at him with hesitant but earnest eyes. But he suddenly shuddered and stood still. Then he turned his eyes upon his mother. He felt irresolute in the presence of the two together; so raising

her brow to his lips he said: "Mother, first of all I will take you to your room."

"First," asked Lambertazzi, "what news have you for me?"

Mario's eyes fell. His mother released him, and moving nearer to Lambertazzi, he said: "I told Bonagiunta only yesterday. His messenger has just left. You have heard——"

Lambertazzi uttered a cry as he stood leaning forward, his hand on the door knob.

"Sir, we did what we could," cried Mario, who was torn between his distress and a new feeling which Lambertazzi's presence roused in him, a mixture of aversion and attraction. The world of men and women had been first opened up to him by this man when he was a boy. He had been dazzled by the fateful determination of sex, a combination of bliss and despair. He had seen only sex in himself, sex in every other being, sex in every animal, sex in every flower. The clouds, heavily laden, inert and ready to burst, rolled over thirsting hills. Half the world languished while the other half was chock-full of seed. Pan had put out his tongue to him on all sides; he could not escape.

And how in the future was he to regard this man Lambertazzi? Was it as the renowned Lord of the City in whose house he had played with Muzio? Or was it as the wicked perpetrator of violence? Yet had he not been the god of his childhood's dreams? Swayed in his emotions between all that he admired and all that he loathed, and heavily burdened by the message of death, he could find no words.

"Where is he? What has happened?" asked Lambertazzi.

The Lady of Laws knew what was coming. She could see it in her son's face. Lambertazzi knew it also. In his eyes flickered a strange light, like the unsteady glow of fire seen through the windows of a house that is burning within. She wanted to prevent Mario uttering the dreadful news. Her tortured heart impulsively cried "halt," but what could she do? "O the poor child, the poor child," she moaned.

"If only I had found him earlier," continued Mario finally. "He lay sweltering in a peasant's hut, beneath filth upon filth, covered with swarms of flies. If only I could have got the leech there in time, he could certainly have saved him, the man told me that a hundred times. But it was too late, the gangrene had begun its work." Mario's head sank. "It was his jump from such a height that did it. With one leg broken he dragged himself away in fear. Then the peasant waggon picked him up in the early morning. Then came the long bumping over a bad road, the

heat, the anxiety, and the loss of time, until I found him. I fetched a leech. He tried all he could."

But Lambertazzi waited for the stark word. It was still unuttered. He could still keep himself in a sort of uncertainty, but his soul, wearying of this twilight which he was creating round it, broke through and spoke out.

"Dead?" he said.

Mario nodded. He saw Lambertazzi stretch out his hand, and heard a terrible cry rise from the depths of his soul. It was like the sound of a falling tree, when the axe has smitten nearly through the trunk, and the ropes are tied about the crown, and the wide-spread mass of branches, trunk and foliage comes crashing to the earth.

"Be still," said Lambertazzi as they both moved towards him. "I have something to do. Bring me writing things."

Mario brought them while the Lady of Laws placed a candle on the table. He wrote as if he were alone, and wiped the cold sweat from his brow.

What he wrote they did not know. He did not put the pen down once, but wrote as if in flight—did he know himself what he was writing? The Lady of Laws wished to prepare food for her son, but her heart, aching for this man who had now no son, yearned to appease him. No kiss, no hand-grip, no look would these two have begrudged such poverty, yet they stood there still as pillars.

At length Lambertazzi roused himself from his work and his tortured musings. His eyes scanned the writing. Then he stuffed it into the leathern wallet hanging from his girdle, cleared his throat, and asked: "Where was it?"

Mario told him the place, and he rose to go. Then he lifted his eyes and looked at Mario. It was a hard look that seemed to encompass him like molten metal. Then, with measured stride, he walked up to the youth, groaned, and took him in his arms. His mantle of dull gold fell about them both.

That the Lady of Laws reflected a great deal on this last scene between Lambertazzi and her son was evident from her subsequent dreams, in one of which her father showed her a piece of amber, as he had once done when she was a child. She looked at it. There was an insect embedded in it, and she mused on the terror of the poor creature as this golden death closed over it. Her father still seemed to be holding it out to her.

Her dreams, mingled with something indefinable which shaped them darkly into a warning, began to occupy her mind by day. Then one day

in the middle of a lecture she surprised herself with the thought that she and Mario would leave Bologna. She would go away and live quietly to herself, or try her fortune at another university, perhaps Padua. "How could you stay here a single day after hearing what once befell you?" she asked herself. She was conscious that the spirit which prompted that question was appealing to her sense of modesty. How strange! Ought she to be ashamed because she continued to be so little ashamed? But the fact that she had found the father, and that it was Lambertazzi, scarcely affected her consciousness. That it was a moral duty for her to be long and deeply concerned about it, some time, somewhere, somehow, seemed to her to be certain. When her thoughts had led her so far, her heart suddenly smiled beamingly upon her from its depths. She assumed composure and went about her daily duties as if she felt them important.

She decided finally to give way to the pressure of her heart and leave Bologna. But Aja fell sick, so she had to wait. Meanwhile, at noon one day, and at the University, she was again visited by Lambertazzi.

"Good day, your Eminence, we must have a talk together," he said, and beneath the gaze of everyone he walked with her up and down the garden path.

She hated all this. "But," she thought, "he has a right to be comforted. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord."

He walked at her side, his chin sunk upon his chest. She wanted to ask him how he was bearing it, but that would have seemed to her as if she, the woman, was holding out her hand to touch him. So she asked: "How does the mother bear it?"

"That is of no consequence," he replied. "What I want to discuss is this: I am going to recognise Mario as my son. He shall be my successor."

"No," she cried out in wild fear.

"He is clever," continued Lambertazzi, "—probably inherited from his grandfather. He is of a noble mother and, most important of all, he is my son. I will tell him myself. Is he here?"

Everything swam before her eyes; the tall larkspurs growing near seemed to flutter like blue rags.

"I will not hear of such a thing," she said. "He has always been my child. He has never had a father. He is without one now, and will never have one."

"Is he here?" demanded Lambertazzi, turning his back upon her.

She took hold of him by his mantle. He pulled it away, and she seized his arm. "Before God and man you have no right to him. I would rather

that we went away from this place—and at once,” she said; and as if through a mist she saw figures approaching along the covered way.

“Right?” he said. “Who has a better right than a father?”

“That counted for nothing all his young years,” she retorted.

“Why should it?” he said. “I had a son. But now things have so turned out, it is good. The illegitimate one is better. Besides, who to-day can distinguish legitimate from illegitimate? Don’t be ridiculous.”

She stood in his way. “You shall not get to my child if I have to tear you from him with hands and teeth.”

He looked at her in silence. Along the covered way the footsteps suddenly ceased. But she took no notice.

“This sort of scene is distasteful to me,” he said at length. “Corpo di Criste! to have to talk like this to a woman! Walk up and down with me again, and listen with all the understanding you can. That women can’t count up to three I know; but I should have thought it worth considering for our Mario to become Lord of Bologna. Unless old Porta, incarnate paragraph that he was, has bequeathed ink instead of blood to your veins, such an honour should make you dizzy with joy. Lord of Bologna! Is that something to make you behave like one of the Furies? Lord of Bologna!”

“And what about me?” she said.

“You have no need to become anything. You are something already, everything needed—his mother,” he replied.

“His mother. Yes, that I am. But not the mother of *your* son,” she said.

“Rather difficult to separate the two,” he retorted. “Come now—be sensible, Ravegnana. You have studied jurisprudence, and in your profession such subtleties miss fire. Leave them to the pedants. If you are thinking about the most Holy Trinity and the Immaculate Conception you speak well. But you must not mix up such notions with life. Now listen, and don’t imagine that I’ve a wicked design on my shield. I need a son. Don’t you realise that? Lambertazzi must not walk childless before Bologna and the Gierimei. Why should they see his work go nameless and lose itself in the shifting sands of time? Come! Make peace. Bring me our Mario. Let him be Lord of Bologna.”

“And I?” she asked.

“You will be on good terms with me, the greatest in Bologna,” he said with deliberation, “which is no disgrace for a woman, especially for a woman of learning who, through her position and activities, has raised herself above the common level of women. If they forgive you the child,

then surely no one will hesitate after so many years to forgive you the lover."

"What? I was your mistress?"

"Yes," he said, "we are both human beings. How else would you have it? I have been turning this thing over in my mind for some days now. I have begun by dropping a word here and there in public. Plenty of opportunities present themselves, and if we so prepare the ground the thing will be easy. My recent visits and our conversations here have been under no cap of invisibility. Then, of course, folk will remember how I chose to indulge my mercy instead of my right when you went off with the Gierimei estate. And if they don't remember, well, I'll remind them. The mother of my Mario was my mistress. Thus everything is understandable."

The Lady of Laws was silent, her face buried in her hands.

"Come," he said. She seemed to hear his smile, for she could not see. "Call him. But first tell me one thing. You have said yourself that you have not cursed Mario's father all these years. The heart does not know indifference in things like that. Therefore, you have loved; probably with howling and teeth-chattering, but in any case loved. Whom?"

The Lady of Laws remained silent, her face covered.

"Whom?" he asked again. "Come now, upon whom did your thoughts rest when you pondered it all? Who held you in his arms on the night of the fire—the night when I in a fury of passion humbled the daughter of Giacomo? The daughter of Giacomo," he repeated wistfully, "Olimpia di Porta Ravegnana. No one seems to remember that you have a christian name, Olimpia. Now, tell me, Olimpia, how you managed that? Where did you learn to conceal yourself, Olimpia? What I conquered was not Ravegnana. It was Bologna, the knightly, the wise; it was that proud Guelfish nest that I symbolically seized and devoured. Ah! And I did it in reality when the right time came. Bologna——. It seemed to me that in your hair that night I was beating down its walls. And never, when I saw you afterwards, could I think that it was only you, Ravegnana. . . . And who did *you* think it was?"

"A god," she replied reluctantly. "But only at night-times," she hastened to add when she saw his eyes light up. "By day I could only think of the meanest Apennine bandit."

"Rome was made by gods and bandits," said Lambertazzi. "Call our son. I see that now I shall get everything to work right."

"Answer carefully," began Ravegnana. "Have you really made up your mind to noise abroad that Mario is your son?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then," she said, "Bologna shall hear from my lips how Lambertazzi ravished a citizen and noble virgin. Then, I think, the people will clearly understand your Muzio's character. If you breathe one word of this, if you let it be thought that I was such a wretched coward as to surrender myself secretly to you, if you lift one finger to give our affair the weak and comfortable aspect that suits your ends, I will cry your outrage in the open market. Then we shall see how the white houses of Bologna can blush for shame. I will shout it from the house-tops till every Gierimei is goaded to indignation and rage. Aloud I will cry it, though it lead to civil war. Yes, let there be civil war, for it will give me space to breathe. The whole of Bologna shall be brought low before you make of me a whore, and of my child a bastard."

"For whom are you fighting now?" asked Lambertazzi. "For the child, or for yourself?"

She turned away from him with scorn. It was enough, for she knew not how to answer.

"You may have as much legal wisdom as Justinian, Tribonian, and all the glossarists put together, woman," he said, "but you conduct your case badly. In the end it is I who am on top. All my life I have required much of this world. You ought to know that."

He held out his hand to her, but she refused to take it.

"I have spoken," she said.

"I also," said Lambertazzi. "So we fight to the bitter end. And you shall face the struggle on ground where you can move neither forwards nor backwards."

The Lady of Laws was hard at work that night. In the early hours of the morning she sent off a messenger to Padua. She had nothing to do at the University in the morning. So she occupied herself with thoughts of the coming struggle, and of Aja, who was fast declining. At midday she heard that Mario had absented himself from the University. She could not wait a moment, threw on her doctor's gown, and hurried there.

"Where is Mario di Porta Ravegnana?" It was the door-keeper she addressed.

"At the Burgher-House, your Eminence," he replied.

"O Cross of Christ!" she exclaimed, "by whose orders?"

"Orders from Lambertazzi," he answered. "Nothing to be afraid of,

your Eminence. The officer in charge of the guard which came here to fetch him, told us so. It is about the death of his son Ser Muzio they are having a sitting. No doubt they want evidence of it."

"So?" said the Lady of Laws. "A citizen and a student of the University is seized and carried off to the Burgher-House by force of arms? We will see about that."

She went to the Magnificus. "Your Reverence——," she cried.

"Hear me first," he exclaimed with uplifted hands. "Your Eminence, we are in a dreadful plight. We teachers of the University, Guelfic every one of us, are at this moment unable to stand by you."

"Enough, your Reverence," she cried with a scorching glare. "God forbid that I should trouble one of you. You might be disturbed in your study of the ancient legal processes. But the Present will confer with the Future; so I go to my pupils. Let me pass, sir, I am in great haste," she cried, stamping her foot as he hurried to the doorway, his sleeves waving in the air. There he stood in her way.

"Dear Madonna, I cannot let you go to your pupils. It is my personal responsibility to keep you from office until the inquiry into your case has been made. It is now pending."

"Inquiry?" she said.

"Yes. Have you received no notice about it?"

"What? Because young Lambertazzi has died?" she asked.

"Not at all. What has young Lambertazzi to do with you? No, you know quite well. It's about the Gierimei estate," he said.

"The old story?" asked the Lady of Laws.

"When Lambertazzi needs something, it is new though it be a hundred years old," he said. "He has witnesses, he has documents, he has everything. Clear yourself, for until you do so this house will not see you again. And as for us, how can we support you in such a matter—a case of high treason?"

"For which reason you appointed me Charity Administrator," she added. Then she reflected an instant. "And what if I go to my pupils without your permission?"

"You will find Lambertazzi's guard before the door," he said. "What their orders are, I don't know. They may arrest you."

"And what would you do then?" she asked.

"We should be sorry for you. But you have only to clear yourself," he said, "and the whole Gierimei party will rush to your side with waving banners. You see——"

"I see," she said. What she saw was a picture of the past—of Sfiga and the days when the whole fabric of his fortunes fell crashing about his ears, when his property was confiscated and his banishment decreed. Again she heard his words as he brooded over the catastrophe: "The Gierimei have collapsed to a man—nothing surprising."

"I see," said the Lady of Laws. "So we are speaking of the party? Yes, of course. You are of the party."

"To be sure," he said.

"The party," she continued, touching her forehead with her hand. "That is—let me see—that is young Bentivoglio, that is the lords Zambrasi and Guarnieri, that is the poet Guittone, that's who you are, and many more. Each one is the party, isn't that so?"

"No," he said, "it is not so. The party is the whole, and the individual is—"

"Quite right," she interrupted, "and the individual is nothing. Now I understand why the party has so many members. Members—a truly marvellous word. Not men but members, please note. Those who cannot qualify as men become members."

"Your Eminence," he said to her aside in a subdued tone, "that is the situation, and it cannot be altered. Let us understand one another. Clear yourself, which means, between you and me, come to terms with Lambertazzi. That is the wise course, and one which for you—you—should not be difficult."

"And the party will rush to my side with waving banners," she added, and went away.

"It is like that, is it?" said the Lady of Laws to herself as she stood still for a moment on reaching the street. "Now to Lambertazzi!"

She betook herself to the Burgher-House. But neither he nor his prisoner were to be found there. So she hurried to Lambertazzi's palace to look for them.

"His Lordship is not receiving."

Thus the janitor greeted her. And a senator looked her up and down before closing the door to go to his lordship.

"Not receiving?" she questioned of the janitor.

"Not you, no, Madonna."

"Not Ravegnana, the lady Doctor of Laws? Indeed! Where is my son?" she asked.

"Where no evil can befall him," answered the man sympathetically. "Go back home, Madonna. There is nothing you can do."

She looked at him with bewilderment. "Let me go to Lambertazzi," she said.

"Saints of Paradise," he replied, "he would strike me down as sure as I am standing here." He raised his halberd and tried to direct her down the steps out of the house, but she slipped under the weapon, ran along a corridor, and thrust open a door. She hurried through one walled space after another till she came to a curtain. She lifted it, and found herself in a shaded room. The air was warm and still, and laden with the aroma of a woman, whose presence she soon noticed. She was half-sitting, half-lying on a couch, embroidering at a frame. She was dressed in black, and her form seemed to merge into the couch. She looked up at the Lady of Laws, who in sudden thought seemed to see her as a vast country, intersected with highways, each one more monotonous than the next. But the reclining figure uttered a feeble cry—an indolent cry, one might say. It was Mona Clarice.

"Don't be alarmed, Gracious Lady," said Ravegnana. "It is I. I am looking for my son."

Lambertazzi's wife looked at her and wept, but not enough to prevent anyone talking to her quite calmly, which the Lady of Laws did.

"Gracious Lady," she said, "help me to find my son. You are a mother yourself."

"Yes," answered the wife in tears, "the mother of a legitimate son, who has had to die in order that your bastard might live and enjoy himself—enjoy himself under my tear-stained eyes." The salt drops trickled down on the embroidery.

"God forbid," said the Lady of Laws, "that your eyes should look upon him. Tell me where he is that I may take him and go away with him, now, to-day, anywhere."

Mona Clarice wept on, but continued her threading. This exasperated the Lady of Laws.

"Put that down. To the devil with it," she cried. "Help me to find my son. I know what I shall do when I have found him."

Mona Clarice continued weeping. Meanwhile she tied up the threads and said: "You have always known what you do. The Lady of Laws always knew everything. She could be man and woman—yes. Learned like a man, venturesome like a man, and unchaste like a woman—but not the best kind of woman. She could always be a Lambertazzi or Gierimei as it suited her. And the heir to Bologna has scarcely breathed his last before she juggles another out of her pocket—as marriageable as

if shot from the earth in a night. I help you? Help yourself! You were always the great helper. This is your masterpiece of aid now, helping Bologna to an heir."

"What is Bologna to me! I want my son," she said.

"O Muzio," moaned the weeping wife over her embroidery. The Law-Lady's eyes unconsciously fell on it. Against every wall as she had hurried through the rooms she had seemed to see this piece of tapestry. And now by the side of this woman lay the sample and pattern. Mona Clarice suddenly began to weep less, looked about her, and counted off the stitches.

With vacant attention the Lady of Laws watched her. She tried to delineate her figure against the background of the couch. Her eye sought the contours of her body, but without result. Everything swam together. Unconsciously she pulled herself up, braced her body, and got ready to give free play to her muscles. There she waited—waited before the fluid figure of this woman as she wept her tepid tears in the twilight.

All at once there was a clanking of halberds and the sound of marching feet. "Is that your husband?" cried the Lady of Laws. And as Mona Clarice looked up nervously, her full chin trembling, her mouth half open, while the tears rolled into it, the Lady of Laws broke down, and flung herself at her feet. "Have pity on me, gracious Lady. What has he done with my son?" she pleaded, looking at her fixedly, and wringing her hands.

"How am I to know?" whined the woman. "I beg of you to go, lest he find us together. You are under suspicion. It is forbidden. Go, go, go."

The clang of the halberds began to sound more distant. She sprang to her feet to follow this sound. Soon she was wandering down steps, along corridors, through an archway, into courtyards; it was like a bad dream. She had lost her way. Then as she tried to retrace her footsteps she saw a door open behind the colonnade on the far side of the spacious sunlit courtyard. About thirty armed men marched out, and lined themselves up. Amongst them she thought she recognised Lambertazzi, and by his side her son.

"Mario," she called, and tried to rush to him with outstretched arms. But she had scarcely made three steps when she was seized and held fast on both sides.

Yet she had had time to see Mario with lowered head walking at Lambertazzi's side, on his face that thoughtful, earnest expression which she knew so well. Lambertazzi's arm was round Mario's shoulders, and

he seemed to be speaking to him in confidence. It was the father walking openly before the world with his beloved son. As Lambertazzi put his arm round him, his amber-coloured mantle was raised with it and fell about the young man. She recoiled and utterly gave way.

She saw his searching look. Then the line of halberdiers closed. She felt herself being dragged by force under the arcade on the opposite side of the courtyard. Soldiers thrust her through a side-door into a deserted street where at first she did not know her whereabouts.

At length she discovered the direction, and ran towards the Ravennana street to get to her house. All eyes were upon her—"Guarda la dotta"—but she paid no heed. Turning into the street, the blue lime-washed walls of her house soon rose into view. But there were soldiers on the threshold. Then Theodore swiftly emerged from the shadow of the wall and seized her by her dress. "Come away, your Eminence," he said.

She followed him. At the corner, behind the stone lions, they stopped.

"The house is occupied," he said. "They are doing their cooking in the garden—with wood from our heap, and things from our cellar. They are searching every room. It's on account of the Gierimei estate."

"Indeed!" she said vacantly.

"Aja is dead," he said. "She passed away just now as the guard were forcing their way in. I was not there, but just afterwards I found her dead."

"Indeed!" said the Lady of Laws. She wanted to go back to the house.

"Don't go, your Eminence," he said, holding her by her dress. "Who knows but what they may extort something from you in writing if you walk into their hands. I will go back and arrange everything and see that our Aja is buried. And you—"

"And I?" she said, still vacantly.

The little man hesitated. "How would you be with Sfiga?" he asked.

"I shall not leave here," she answered. For a while they were both silent.

"Inquire after me," she said collecting herself, "at the Clarissa Convent. But first get me some money."

"Money? Your Eminence, they have taken everything. By orders of Lambertazzi. The State has now got its claws on the whole of our property."

"Good-night," she said. "See that Aja is buried, and ask after me from the Clarissa nuns."

She went off in the direction of the convent.

"I will stay there," she thought, "and draw up my case in writing and send it to——" She stood still in the street. To whom? To the academical senate of Padua? Or to someone else? There must be redress somewhere for a mother who has lost her son. "Or—shall I go back? In Bologna must this thing be carried through. Shall I plant myself on the Burgher-House steps in front of the great San Petronio and there cry woe to Lambertazzi the ravisher of virgins, the plunderer of mothers?"

She ran back towards the centre of the town. Turning everything over in thought she could see herself already standing on those steps, but the scene slowly changed, for her mind now substituted what she had already lived through for what she had thought might happen. She was standing on other steps, and at her feet stretched Sfiga bleeding, his wife lying over him. Once again she clearly saw his terribly pale face. She saw herself standing there conducting his affair. *His* affair——. The Lady of Laws slackened her steps. The dark impulses of her soul required some external prop to help her to appear before the populace. Her own cause she could not champion.

There remained the convent. So she ran there, trying to make up for lost time. It lay in richly cultivated surroundings. She hurried along a hedge of blossoming jasmine, and swung the door-knocker.

"Take me to the Abbess," she said. She waited alone on the stone floor of a badly built hall.

The Abbess, a sallow-faced woman, her hands tucked into the sleeves of her hood, came and stood before her. Her deep-set eyes seemed to be looking into the far distance. They were the eyes of Lambertazzi. The Lady of Laws vividly realised that she was in the presence of his sister, Sor Perpetua.

"Your Reverence," she cried and threw herself at the feet of the Abbess, kissing her garments. She had descended to within three steps of Ravegnana, and remained standing there.

"Ravegnana," she said. "I have expected you. You seek shelter."

"Yes. I have been driven from house and home."

"I know," said Sor Perpetua. "If you had come yesterday, Ravegnana, I would have received you and no one could have laid a finger upon you. But early this morning I received a letter from his Lordship, my brother. I cannot take you in. He forbids it."

"Are you not under the spiritual authorities?" asked Ravegnana. "You are under the Archbishop."

"The letter," said Sor Perpetua, "came to me by way of the Archbishop's office. My dear Ravegnana, we cannot so violently go against both the spiritual and temporal authorities." She laid her hand upon her.

"His Lordship has written me about your dispute. If I am to advise you, it is to tell you that you have only to say one word. Then everything your heart desires will be yours. My brother will be glad to restore everything."

"One word indeed? What word?" she asked.

"Concedo," said the Abbess.

"Really?" said Ravegnana.

"Really," repeated the Abbess. "And you will have everything; your academical position, your son, your house, your money, the proceedings against you quashed. Just one word. Surely that should not be difficult to a soul devoted to God. I will send one of the cloister servants to the town with it, and to-morrow all will be well."

"And to-morrow all will be well," repeated the Lady of Laws. "To-morrow is Ravegnana a dissolute woman; to-morrow is the grandson of Giacomina di Porta a bastard; to-morrow is the University disgraced. Then the notorious mistress of Lambertazzi will have her triumphal entry, and she will demonstrate to the academical youth what is meant by honour and dishonour, right and wrong. To-morrow all will be well." She drew herself up; and the Abbess at once removed the soft white hand she had laid on her.

"Are you here in the name of God?" asked the Lady of Laws.

"Yes, I think so," said the Abbess.

"You think so," said Ravegnana, "and yet you ask me to do the devil's business."

Sor Perpetua languidly crossed herself, all the time looking sorrowfully at her. "I have found," she said, "that whoever builds up his life on the Word of God, has the right to make the foundation as broad as possible. How can we live otherwise? You in your position should be guided by a word spoken by Our Lord and Saviour Himself: 'Be ye therefore as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.'"

The Lady of Laws was silent.

"Or here is another," said the Abbess: "'Woe to him by whom offence cometh.' You know how fragile is the life of a State or community. His Lordship cannot stand disgraced for now and all time before the senate and the people, as you would have him stand."

"What? Yet no one has disgraced him save himself. What has happened cannot be changed," said Ravegnana.

"Quite right," said Sor Perpetua. "Therefore we must pretend that nothing has happened, and—"

"Let him give me back my son, and then nothing has happened," said Ravegnana. "He may rob me of everything else, and I will take my Mario in my arms, and go away without a word."

"A duke must have a son," cried Sor Perpetua. "Woman, why are you so flint-hearted? Is wretched human honour everything to you? Don't you know Christ?"

"I know Christ," said Ravegnana. "I know Him Who made a scourge and drove the unholy ones out of the temple when they bartered there."

"Enough," said Sor Perpetua. "Would you, a beggar, drive me out of my own house? You are worthy of each other—you and Lambertazzi. . . . The hearts of Bologna! the more life burns them the harder they become, and the more they glow the more they stiffen."

Ravegnana quickly descended the steps, crossed the hall, and threw open the door. Outside it was night.

"There," said the Abbess, "go your way wherever you must."

Ravegnana controlled herself and went. The door closed behind her. It was raining. She stood in the street.





CHAPTER XIII



SHE went away, went counting her steps, always three at a time, after the syllables of the only name her thoughts could hold, the name that beat through her blood—Mario. As she became conscious of it she spoke the name against the wind and rain. She lingered over it, dwelt on the M, exhaled the A, letting it steal gradually into the air. The I was drawn back slowly into her throat in a whimper of tenderness. She brooded on the O; and then spoke the whole name over again in the same way, making it revolve yearningly, letting it linger in her mouth as it kissed the darkness. Then she walked more swiftly, and uttering it with increasing avidity made of the name an introduction to communion with Nature. "Mario," she said to the tepid rain, which struck her face. "Mario," she complained to the wind, and as if it mourned with her it changed its direction, and blowing eastwards from the Adriatic came to her with a whiff of salt spray in its breath. A straggling bush stretching over the road tore at her cloak. "Mario," she said, bending down to loosen it. But the bush was of locking, intertwining growth and form; it held her fast, and would not let her go. Then a tree which rose straight up from the middle of the field shook its head at her and sighed "Mario." A crescent moon glinted for a moment through the cloud-tossed sky. "Mario," it said to her, and then it disappeared. But just for a moment, clearly outlined, she had caught sight of a pallid, fleeting landscape, and to mark the way a little makeshift bridge over a thin streak of water clotted with foam. Right and left over the stretching fields gleamed the birch-trees, the disappearing moon just above them plucking at the hair of their branches. Every little hill seemed to be vaulted by despair, seemed about to explode and shatter; and the distant quarry glared at her as she stood there with bared breasts as if meditating self-murder. She was standing face to face with Nature, that terrible and mighty lady of grief.

There she wept in the midst of the world, wept from rage and grief—"Ah, he has taken him from me!" Then she stretched her arms violently against all she loved, and fell sobbing on her face in the middle of the road. That inner voice which never once had been prompted by her feelings, now clearly said to her, "You are going mad."

She wanted to feel herself saved; it was as if she desired someone to take her life from her, someone who would go on living it in her place

so that she might have nothing more to do with it. Yet she put no confidence in the ringing voice. Surely it mocked at her! Yes, the mind mocks when the heart gets out of hand, when the heart acts as if it were alone in the world. "No," answered the Lady of Laws scarce two seconds after, "I am not mad, I am sure of that." Whether or not she wished herself mad is another matter. She stood up, rather ashamed before the face of Nature, while Nature seemed rather ashamed before her. As she moved on, the human in her became isolated.

Quite alone with herself she began to think. "First of all, where am I going? And take notice, for the first time in my life I have no aim." This gave her a sort of pleasure; but she did not know why. Perhaps she had always been too intelligent and reasoning. But of one thing she was quite sure, she was not going mad.

But it was not to be endured. After all, why should it be endured? She stood still, thinking: "The same person who trampled on Maddalena and Sfiga is now trampling on me. The heel is now on my throat. What?" she cried, "stealing away in the middle of the night? Unworthy image of woman! Stealing away dumb as sin from Bologna by night? Bravo, daughter of old Porta. Fine indeed! I'd like to know what sort of a world it is that you, the so-called Lady of Laws, delight to create from the strength of your sense of right! What is it? For this world of yours men must be born without bones, without arms or legs, or any steadfast gait? They must crawl along the ground, so as not to block the path of any gracious lord-tyrant? And no knives I suppose are sharpened in your world? Ah! knives, knives! Knives to twist and turn in the body of a dog of a Lambertazzi who kidnaps your child.

"And what had you to boast about to the cloister-woman? You think you know the Christ who used a whip? Must they always be things of superhuman greatness before they are good enough for you to gabble about? And do you think, too, that by letting people spit in your face and then going away lest you should upset their pleasure, you turn yourself into a follower of Christ? Shall I tell you what your Christianity is? Nothing but sloth—you can make sure of that. Already in your mother's womb started the humdrum routine part of you—for you were insufficient to become a man. And ever since then it has always been the same. Who in the devil's name, Ravegnana, told you to live always so inside yourself? Is that what we are here for? No wonder that you never had a hand free when a stronger than you came and took away what he could use! Be not astonished that you stand where you stand,

cast out by every reasoning man, into the dark, into the rain, into the fields, already far beyond the city bounds. Each, my dear, gets in this world what he deserves, in this world that a stronger has made."

She stood staring. "Yes, Mario, my child, your bad, untender mother couldn't look after you! The woman that is no woman, whom the Bolognese hills ought to fall upon, the woman over whom the mountains of the hard joyous Romagna country ought to roll raging, is an abortion that should be blotted from the face of this Italian land. Stay with your father, Mario! Stay with the man of Bologna! Perhaps you will still grow your griffin claws.

"And I? Where in the end shall I go? For the defeated I am much too bad—even for Sfiga. He was honest with himself; he knew himself, and so became a robber-chief and murderer of women. I alone stand outside the world of men of action, such a nobody that moon and star shine through me, and the sea-wind pierces me."

Silently she stretched out her hand to God. It came back empty. After so many years of work, of suffering, of struggling, of believing, of loving, this was the end—nothing.

A harsh wind blew over the field and rattled her mantle. The rain and mud had soaked it, but now it was dry as a board. She cowered hopelessly against a stone and leaned her head on her arm. So she sat, detached from herself, as if she were no more there.

And then a Wonder happened. Like all real wonders, it happened quite naturally. That Spirit which weighs matters and turns them to inner and spiritual account was not so dead as in her foolishness she would have had it. Suddenly it broke through the surface mirror of the soul and moved clearly into her consciousness. What it brought to her was a vision.

She saw—a dark little room in a dark house, where the air seemed to quiver with the pain that went through it. The fiercest of this pain was about to be suffered by a woman, standing dumbly in this dark room.

She was to bear it like a crown, the only one that really matters, the crown of thorns. It was on the night of Candlemas. The woman in the unruliness of her heart was flinging her arms in all directions, to the ceiling above and the floor beneath. "I renounce everything from this day forth," she was saying, "my heart is from to-day without house or home, enclosed by nothing and possessing nothing." But in answer to

this, God laid the child into the outstretched empty arms. He laid a son in the heart that had torn down all its walls.

We know well that Christ was born only in a poor stable, where the night-wind blew, cradled only in a manger where the lower animals satisfied their hunger, that to his holy table he brought the beggars from the highways, gathered from the hedges and fences. We know that.

We know it. But knowing is not living, and some people when they suffer his experiences know not what it was which moved his spirit. But that does not matter. Peace the more boundless to you, Ravegnana! Look round! Here is the mountain peak to which your eyes turned, where you in strange holy light have always bathed. To-day your feet have brought you to it; it is the same mountain peak, though at first you knew it not. But that does not matter. In the Kingdom of God at a first glance and from an earthly standpoint everything is upside down. It is not the fault of God's Kingdom, it is the fault of our eyes. But they grow accustomed.

Be still and come nearer. There are places in life where we talk, and there are others where we simply live. This is such a place. Come. I have always loved you; therefore I have drawn you to me in great kindness.

When God says, "Come!" He means get rid of yourself. The Lady of Laws lifted her head from the stone like Jacob, and went away, moving in a great reality. When we enter the Spirit of God we are silent. Before we enter into Him, we talk and chatter. Once we melt into God we are silent, and for those who stay outside the curtain falls.

It was raining again, and the morning was trying to break through. Round her on every side rolled a great undulating plain, dark and dreary and strange. Grey through the early morning light, and smitten by the rain, loomed the birch trees swishing and rustling from moment to moment on either side of the way. The Lady of Laws looked round her, and came to the conclusion that she was somewhere south of the Faenza road, in the neighborhood of Medicina.

She wandered on for a long time. Then a little wood stretched darkly down to the road. Where the slope began she noticed some wooden huts.

The rain streamed down through the early dawn. Her dress and cloak hung heavily round her legs, her sleeves clung like wrinkled skin to her arms, her hair was like a soaked cap. She looked at the streaming shingle roofs of the huts, lifted dully against the pale light of dawn.

Then, hunger pulling at her steps, she moved towards them. On

something which looked like a turnpike somebody was sitting oblivious of the rain.

A man's voice came harshly in her direction—"Halt." Then, crooking his arm, he made a gesture to her to go southwards and avoid the huts.

But she came nearer.

"Don't you hear? You must go round."

But the Lady of Laws, estranged from life, was standing face to face with her soul. She asked herself what in this world could induce anybody to ask her to take a roundabout way after such a life as hers; so she came nearer.

His voice came: "What do you want?"

"Bread," she said, and dragging her steps nearer saw that the turnpike was a thick rope which had recently been drawn across the path. The man was a Franciscan monk.

"Bread?" he cried out. "Stand there. Bread? I may not give you bread, for if you eat it you will eat death. This is the plague camp."

"Indeed?" said the Lady of Laws. "Has the plague reached here?"

"It seems so," he replied. "It is moving towards Bologna. Go back."

"Bread," she said with outstretched hand.

"From where do you come, so hungry that you would eat the bread of death?"

"Are there sick ones there?" she asked; and stared at the huts.

"Yes, to the left. On the right we bury the dead. Go back. If you come one step nearer I must, in sorrow, do my duty, and with these hands drag you inside. He who comes too near the plague camp may not go back."

"The sick are up there, aren't they?" asked the Lady of Laws, leaning over the barrier. "Have you nurses enough?"

"No, never enough. I ought to know because this is the third plague I have lived through. They had it first over in Treviso, where the Gierimei for three years have made the country so unsafe. We were able to silence it that time. But war stirred it up again, and I nursed the sick for the second time in Parma and Guastalla. Bread, O woman, you shall now have, for it is too late to go back. Curse me not. You were warned."

The monk lifted the barrier and let her pass. Then he gave her bread from his bag. On a stone by the wayside she sat and ate it.

"And now what?" he asked.

"I have understood," she said, "that you have not enough nurses."

"And you mean that you want to——?"

"Once I am here, yes. But my skill, I fear, is not too great."

"Who are you?" he asked. "What means that red cloak? Do you want to lift the water tankard to the cracking blue lips as they search the air? Do you want to wrap in wet clothes the coal black limbs, as puffed with poison they drop from the body's trunk? Inhuman forms—ponder!—the head you know only by the place that cries. And the heat and the stench, and with the first mouthful of air you may swallow Death. Perhaps it is all the same to you; perhaps you wish it. But see the first one die, and then you'll think differently. In God's name, why do you wish for this?"

The Lady of Laws stared into the air, and was silent. She ate her bread. A little bell tolled. It sounded so shadowy, as if the air were filled with the voice of twilight; while every drop of rain which had fallen through the night seemed to chatter to it. At the same moment there came down the slope the monk who was relieving him who was speaking to her.

After a few words the Lady of Laws went up the hill with the Franciscan, and entered the plague huts.

Two weeks later one of the Bolognese outposts, which was scouring the district, arrived at the plague camp near Medicina. The two men halted twenty paces from the barrier, and commenced to disinfect the air with burning juniper branches. Through the smoke as it rose in blue clouds they parleyed with the Franciscan.

"We are sent by his Lordship Lambertazzi of Bologna," they said. "Has a woman in a red cloak passed through?"

"No one goes through here," cried the monk. "They go round or remain."

"Have you seen such a woman?"

"Maybe," said the monk.

"In a doctor's cloak?"

"Blue dress and red cloak as if she were the Holy Virgin," replied the monk.

"Cross of Christ!" cried one of the men, "it sounds like her. Where is she?"

The monk pointed to the right.

"What? Gone to Faenza?" shouted the foremost runner, who, staring in that direction, could see nothing but newly cast-up mounds of earth. The other spoke to him and pointed out a great cross of planks roughly nailed together. It rose ominously above the ground.

"Can it be that she is dead?" shouted the runner, as he advanced a few steps, rapidly swinging the faggots. Through the blue smoke the monk nodded in reply. He was wasted and white, and the hollows under his eyes were blue.

"Fellow," said the Bolognese, "whoever it was let her into this plague pit is a dead man, as sure as I am alive."

"You say it," affirmed the monk.

"What?" cried the Bolognese.

The monk pointed to the right.

"What? Speak man, if we are to make sense of you. Are you a Carthusian—I speak in plain earnest. Lambertazzi will flog to pieces the man who let her in here. . . . But first of all," turning to his companion, "God have mercy on the man who has to break this news. Now, speak, brother, where is he who let her pass through here?"

"He lies at her side under the same lime heap," said the monk. He smiled, showing his teeth and blue gums.

"Holy Heaven! How can I tell that to Lambertazzi?"

"Don't tell it," said the monk with indifference. "Wait. In a few days Bologna will get a visit in person from one here who shall give him a burning kiss from the woman in the blue dress and red cloak."

The two men from Bologna stumbled back. They stood conversing and pressed close, all the time spreading clouds of blue smoke on each side of them.

"Father," said the one who had first spoken, as he cleared his throat and moved a step nearer to the felled tree. "One word more, Father. There is possibly a last greeting or blessing, or something of the sort for the son of this woman, and perhaps also for our master?"

"No," replied the monk.

"Nothing? Think a little."

The monk shook his head.

"Father, perhaps then, for the sake of the precious wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ, you could be so good as to invent something."

"Gentlemen," said the monk, who had to laugh in spite of his miserable condition, "I think the woman in the blue dress and red cloak said all she had to say while she was with you in the town."

"That may be so," said the man. "What the University paid her for was to speak; but when she slipped past me under my halberd the other day you could see that she had more than one thing on her mind. But try and recollect, Father, for the sake of the precious wounds of our Lord

Jesus Christ, because I know not what will happen when we go back to his Lordship with this news. The woman's son refuses everything; he won't eat, won't drink, won't sleep, and won't answer because his mother has been brought to grief and pain. It was the most pitiable sight that a man could look on. Our master banged his fists to pieces on the young man's door, and then knelt on the threshold the whole night long. In the end we had to break the door down with an axe; and between its strokes his Lordship pushed and pulled so hard that splinters an inch long went into his flesh. He was certain that the youth had done himself a violence. It was really worse than that, if one may say so. When he burst into the room, there stood the young man like a marble statue over a grave. 'Say something, my child,' cried his Lordship. 'Look at your father, only move, or weep, or wail. Why then won't you speak to me? Does my only child refuse me a single poor word?' I tell you, Father, it would have hurt you with astonishment to hear his Lordship speak as he did.—Isn't that true, Fabruzzo?—On his knees the whole time, think of it—continually kissing the young man's hands and pawing him all over, while the tears poured from his eyes in torrents.—Isn't that true, Fabruzzo?—Till at last the young man, slowly and nervously, and with short sudden jerks, turned his head from the window, stared at the wall above his Lordship and just said, 'Where is my mother?'—that was all. We stood in the doorway and watched; but no matter, our master would have done just the same if the whole of Bologna had been looking on. 'Where is my mother?' That shook him properly, and—Isn't it true, Fabruzzo?—he turned on us like a blue-black thundercloud. 'Ho, there! you vermin,' he raged, 'can't you hear? Fetch the Lady of Laws at once if you have to dig her out of the ground!' and he gave me such a kick in the buttocks that they're still blue. But I didn't so greatly mind; it was a natural thing to do."

The man coughed, drew in his breath, and wiped the perspiration from his face.

The monk was sitting silently a short distance away from him, his arms resting on the barrier.

"Is it not pitiful for so great a lord," continued the Bolognese, "that he may lose this heir also, and so soon after the first one? Now, Father, you cannot wish for that. Say there was some blessing from this woman; what can it cost so pious a man as you! Otherwise there will be the devil to pay for the whole lot of us in Bologna."

"There will be that anyway," said the monk.

"Now, just think, Father. Such a woman must have said something."

"We are cut off from life here," answered the Franciscan. "We swim in God like fish in water, and we are just as dumb. Too great is the hopelessness which shuts us in, and too great is the hope for which we live and die. Go in peace, my children, I see the juniper is burning out."

The Bolognese fell on his knees.

"Be merciful to us," he cried. "A short blessing!"

"Hold your breath," cried the monk. "The juniper burns out. Take a blessing, then, for all I care, if it means so much to you. There was no cursing on that woman's face, so far as I can call to mind. Bless whom you will, bless Lambertazzi, bless his son, bless anyone else in Bologna who may need blessing. But see to it that you get away from here."

That was all the plague could tell them. Two weeks later it was in Bologna. "The mother reaches after the child from the lime-pit near Medicina," thought Lambertazzi. He stared out of the window at the poplars rising grey against the sallow sky, and made frequent signs of the cross in the direction of Medicina.

People were falling dead in the streets. In San Petronio many dropped down during mass. Others who were overtaken while they were walking in the fields threw themselves in despair into the Reno. The water became polluted, as did all the rivers flowing into the Adriatic from Ferrara to Urbino and still further south.

But this did not disturb Lambertazzi. He was concerned about only one human being, one life to which he clung with all his fibres. He had told Mario that his mother was in safety at Medicina. He dared not tell him the truth.

The youth sat in the palace in a room which had been furnished with his belongings from the house of Ravennana. His lute and books were there; but he never touched them. Since he had asked "Where is my mother?" not a word had come from his lips. He sat still at the table, his black hair hanging straight down over his right hand as it propped his head. He wore only the clothes his mother had given him and refused all others. Often, for more than an hour at a stretch, Lambertazzi sat opposite him, looking at him. Once towards evening as he thus watched him, so silent and suffering, he saw in his face, clearer than he had ever before seen them, the features of Ravennana. His skin, like hers, showed a tinge of transparent yellow. The eyelids with their long lashes were heavily closed, and beneath them he could imagine her grey eyes. The forehead between the brows was wrinkled in fearful pain. The hair-line

was high and even. But it was the lips, bloodless, parted and quivering, which made the likeness so staggering. Lambertazzi's thoughts flashed back to the evening before Mario's birth. He remembered all that compelled him to go to Ravegnana's house, a hostile curiosity concerning the mother, the necessity to know the fate of the Gierimei, a jealous concern for his child whose imminent birth might take place in the enemy's camp. He saw the Lady of Laws clearly before him as she collapsed in his presence from deadly fear, though still inspired by that helpless pride which had obstructed him to the end. He was seized with a desire to see her once again in life, to speak with her, which meant, to continue the struggle with her. He rose, took the mirror from the wall and held it in front of Mario, who did not lift his eyes.

"Look," he said.

Mario shook his head.

"Why not?" said Lambertazzi.

Mario broke the silence. "I hate my face."

"Why?" asked the father, his voice faltering.

"Because it is yours," cried Mario springing up. "I hate myself because I am your son. And I shall hate myself till I am dead. I hate every breath I breathe because it holds me to life. If only I could get away from this place and go to the worst plague hole in Bologna, then I should breathe with rapture. I hate my thoughts because they are strong and clear and flaming; they are your thoughts, and no longer do I desire to think your cursed thoughts. Rather would I be that chuckling, grinning idiot, that beggar who sits at the Ravenna gate. I hate my manhood because you are a man. I hate the day of my puberty because you violated my mother. I hate all life because you are alive. And I love death, I long for it, I cry for it, because my mother is there, in her grave—dead, dead, dead." He cried, he panted, weeping without tears, bowed over the table. "I know she is dead! Mother! mother! come and take me! O take me with you, sweet mother——"

"She is here! Look!" cried Lambertazzi. His voice sounded strange to his own ears. "Look, you are not me. Look! See how like your mother you have grown. She is here, my child. Look!" The mirror was thrust into Mario's hands.

But Mario lay bowed over the table and would not look. Lambertazzi seized him under the arms and made him look. With head sunk backwards and with hesitating, unwilling glance he began to recognise himself in the mirror. He looked closer, and, in the failing evening light

dimly recognised his mother's chin, cheeks and mouth. Weak and in pain he smiled; and she, pallid and uncertain, and as if from another world, smiled on him in return. "Mother!" cried Mario, but the vision dissolved in his tears and melted into unreality. He held the mirror in his arms, and covered it with countless kisses.

But it was as if this half glimpse into the Beyond had strengthened him. For next day Lambertazzi found him in another frame of mind, and full of a new and composed manliness. He was standing by the table reading a book, which he closed as he lifted his head and looked his father full in the face.

"Well?" said Lambertazzi. "How are you? Better, I hope?"

"In the grave," answered the young man. "But now there is something to settle between us. I ought to have done it long ago; but I could not think. This night it has come to my heart that I must not die before I have done one thing."

Lambertazzi walked up to him. He was troubled.

"Tell me now—what have you sent piping round the town about my mother," asked Mario Laureato. "That she was a bawd? Or do they know the real truth?"

Lambertazzi had prepared his answer; but before he could give it his son continued: "Do they know the facts as they should know them? Is the crime now yours? Is the shame yours?"

"Child," said Lambertazzi, "we will speak about that later. Believe me, here now in Bologna, they've got something else to break their heads over."

"Indeed?" said Mario, his eyes beginning to glow.

"The great calamity is upon us," continued Lambertazzi. "All the churches are crammed full. The people stretch their arms out and put themselves in the form of a cross; they fling themselves on the floor, and lie there for hours through the day and night."

"Let them rot, every one of them," said Mario. "Let them die, whole houses of them in every street, till the town is empty, and nought is left, nought, nought, but a lonely frightened dog to howl this thing to unfeeling heaven."

"Jesus, Maria!" cried Lambertazzi.

"These two most holy persons," cried Mario, "will hold cold-blooded conclave; and they will conclude that all the stench that rises up to them from the plague-stricken carcasses of Bologna is nothing at all compared with your crime."

"Thunder and lightning!" cried Lambertazzi beginning for once in his life to despair. "What has happened to you? What has happened to everything? And what especially is happening to me? Be born of whom you will, you cursed buck! You may have descended from heaven when the dog star fell down, for ought I care. Is that holy enough for you? Is that respectable enough for you? One man is made in the same way as another, let me tell you. This is most fine! Perhaps your mother sniffed you up from a bunch of lilies at her bedside one night. How do I know! Go and spin what tale you like to Bologna."

"I shall tell Bologna nothing," said Mario. "You shall tell the truth, and tell it yourself."

"Have I lived to be fifty for this!" cried Lambertazzi. "You have the insolence to stand here and give me curtain lectures? That's a thing no other human being ever dared do, and least of all your own mother. By the skull of Saint Dominic, why do we beget children?"

"I never asked to be your child," said Mario. "What are the facts? Have you told people the truth?"

"The half of it," replied Lambertazzi.

"Ah!" cried Mario, "there is no such thing as a half-truth. A half-truth is a whole lie. Fare you well! And now let the last horror reign."

When he had spoken these words he turned his back upon his father and raised his arms like a cursing necromancer towards the window and the streets of Bologna. Such a gesture had never been seen in his mother's house, where they had always lived without ceremony and in entire simplicity. The father leaped towards him in desperation, pulled down his arms, and for some time made signs of the cross over the town. "Be reasonable," he said, "and you shall have what you want. I am Lambertazzi, and there is no disaster that my name cannot survive." Then he went.

When his son was alone he turned his sorrow-stricken face to the window, leaned with his back against the door lest he should be seen through the keyhole, and allowed a faint smile to pass over his features.

How Lambertazzi arranged to keep his word is unrecorded. Four months later we find him in San Petronio at the great thanksgiving service which was at the same time a mass for the dead. At his side stands Mario Porta dei Lambertazzi who hereafter always accompanies him, first in a short and successfully concluded campaign against Imola and Forli. He appears to be liked by the people. The University students are

apparently supporting him—and so are most of the Gierimei. For the people he is the son of the Dotta.

During his life the strife between the Lambertazzi and the Gierimei became insignificant; and it was this descendant of a bourgeois scholar who, during a beneficent rule, is said to have brought the town back to Guelfic policy.

According to an account of a later century, there was to be seen on the tympanum of one of Bologna's old houses a scene from Ovid, the Birth of Bacchus. Zeus, a middle-aged man, armed as they were in the times of the civil wars, lets loose the lightning against Semele, self-constrained thereto by the fate that hangs over men and gods alike. Semele falls before him, rent by his fire, and from her expiring body the god lifts the boy Bacchus and shelters him in his own loins to maturity.

Whether this work dated back to the rule of Bartolommeo Lambertazzi cannot be proved. Whether more than a mythological scene was in the artist's mind is also uncertain.

Also where is the picture of the Madonna by the painter of Cortona? On what cloister wall is to be seen that quiet study in colours red and blue? In what tumults of war was it destroyed by fire?

The "Marmora Felsinea" of the year 1690, a collection of remarkable Bolognese monuments, mentions, too, the mystery of Aelia Lælia Crispis, who was said to be neither virgin, woman, nor man, neither chaste, nor lascivious, *sed omnia*.

So from time to time human beings appear who for a while ring in each other's ears their riddle, until, gently freed from the confused drone, they sink back whence they came, whilst the rest look on in wonder.





Children's Literature

MARY GRAHAM BONNER



THE attention shown books for young people during the past few years has enormously stimulated the writers of these books. If one recalls the books for young people of a generation ago one finds that worthwhile books were uncommon. Those of high merit stood out with individual security. It was easier for the author of that generation. If he had literary ideals and ambitions of a definite and vigorous character he received homage in return for his labor. Now there are so many more good books for young people that he stands a very likely chance of being noticed but slightly in comparison with that of his competent predecessor. Does it discourage him? Not at all. He only strives that much harder to achieve a foothold in spite of the keen, genuine and high type of competition that confronts him. So it makes for better books—and better books we always want.

Besides this type of author who always wanted to make his work as fine as possible there are the others whose zest for their subjects is clearly written into their materials. These are improving the factual books—the stories on radio, aviation, exploration, engineering. Their realization that there is an interested following makes them that much more stimulated and that much more careful. They won't cheat an awaiting audience with inaccuracies.

Still again there are the authors who are left behind because of their very lack of sincerity. There still exist as there always has existed, and to some extent always will exist, the fatuous type who thinks that almost anything foolish enough is appropriate reading matter for the very young. As a matter of fact the simplest of writing must always be the most meticulously done. Nonsense, as intangible as it seems, must have stability to exist and to live.

But, fortunately, the attention directed toward children's books of late, is eliminating much of the worthless, the trashy and the insincere.

So it is encouraging to watch a branch of literature spread out, flourish, and show such signs of inherent virility. At the same time one must not

place all the credit to the attention that has been shown this specific form of work. There always have been writers fired with zeal for their audience of boys and girls, but the competition and the critical valuation have been invigorating steps in the right direction. In addition parents are more elastic of mind than they were a generation ago. They do not order certain prescribed reading so much as they enthusiastically guide—for to insist upon the reading of a certain book is one of the most unfair of parental insistences.

Nor are parents so timorous of their own opinions as once they were. It has always seemed to me to be the height of literary cowardice to scorn books of the present-day because they had not yet proved themselves to be classics. It shows such a lack of individual perspicacity. It is as though one said, "I haven't the brains or the feelings or the penetration to know about this book. I must wait for the added opinions of people throughout the years before I can tell." Inherent vitality is what makes a classic. And a book, whether modern or old, possessing that vitality, will belong to the present and the future. In addition to which there are the books worth while because of their scientific timeliness or because they are enlightening and entertaining. There are also the passing book pleasures in life as well as the permanent ones.

Feminism to the contrary, it is still a man's world and in the realm of juvenile books it is a boy's world, for the number of books for boys that are worth attention are far in excess of the number of good books for girls.

This spring Hawthorne Daniel has written a fine story for boys in *Bare Hands*, illustrated by Arthur A. Jansson (Coward-McCann, \$2.00). It is the tale of three men and a boy who are shipwrecked off the Coast of Alaska—a deserted, bleak, wild section of the coast which is described graphically. Nor is it described in that superficial manner of excitement that is a tendency of the kind of adventure writer who thinks a staccato style is all-sufficient. Mr. Daniel is thorough in his writing. There are no loopholes, no glossing over surfaces. His writing is intrinsic. In this book the shipwrecked ones build a steamboat by hand and boys are going to respond eagerly to the complete details, the engineering knowledge, the incorporation of something so real and definite. The character drawing is excellent and the book adds to the standing of its author who produced two books in the autumn deserving notice. One, *The Clipper Ship*, gave a clear and fascinating panorama of the history of clipper ships,

while the other, *The Seal of the White Buddha*, was one of those needed books—a good story for girls.

The Young Folk's Book of Polar Exploration, by E. L. Elias (Little, Brown and Company, \$2.00), is an abbreviated and paraphrased account of the more important expeditions to both Poles. The author has kept largely to factual data and has not attempted to imbue it with any particular literary style. But it stands forth as a singularly clear record of the work of explorers, the people with whom they came in contact, the conditions under which they worked, the daily monotony as well as the more stirring and more dangerous episodes. This incorporation of monotony seems to me an important part in exploration. There are such books as describe only the thrilling moments, or cover the long discouragements with a paragraph of beautiful writing. The petty and continuous annoyances and inconveniences are so much more difficult than the larger, more insurmountable dangers that challenge achievement. I remember the only youth of our crowd who had ambitions to travel into the most dangerous and perilous of countries and there convert the heathen or bravely put an end to their barbarities. He was quite serious about it and we regarded him as brave until one morning we had a breakfast picnic on the shore of the lake. The weather, which had been so lovely when we had planned it, was misty and chilly. The wood at first refused to burn and then refused to do anything but smoke. There were essentials that had been forgotten. Altogether it was a dismal party. But our verbally brave youth outdid all the rest in the petty and miserable way in which he grumbled and complained.

So I have always believed in telling something of the small drawbacks to great deeds. Here, for example, in this book of Polar exploration, is a description of the Eskimo home. "Furniture there is practically none, and the ventilation is still less. All sorts of queer odors scent the stifling atmosphere—boiling broth, the blood of seals, stale clothes, unwashed bodies. For the Eskimo has no opinion of water, and very seldom washes either himself or his clothing. Nor can an Eskimo swim. It would be too cold, he argues, to go into water without a fur coat; and with a fur coat who could keep afloat? And so he gives water the go-by and hobnobs very contentedly with dirt."

Anything but charming to be sure—but it belongs to a book of exploration!

Although, as I have said, girls are not the favored ones, there are some good books for them each season, though their number is insignificant

compared with the interesting books for their brothers. This spring Caroline Dale Snedeker has written a successor to *Downright Dencey* in *The Beckoning Road* (Doubleday, Doran and Company, \$2.00). If your daughters have not read the former book it will not make any difference in the understanding of this. Manning de V. Lee has made the illustrations. The road leads this family from Nantucket to a town in Indiana called New Harmony where an experiment of real democracy in living was attempted in the Pioneer days. Dencey is the heroine of the book and it is based primarily on most interesting fact. They start off bravely—the necessities they are told to bring are kitchen furniture, spades, hoes, axes and rakes. They travel by way of New York—although the daughter is disappointed it could not have been Boston—and the details of their trip are so vivid that we seem to feel as though along with these people. The account of life in New Harmony under the community régime is a most delightful part of the book and the touch of romance is an integral part of this story. Perhaps more than anything else this book has a flavor of its own. I heartily recommend it to the parents of older girls.

As I have said, however, boys in their teens receive more book benefits than girls of parallel ages, and before leaving the field of books for older readers I shall have to suggest one more in this spring's list to interest boys. It is called *Harbor Pirates*, and is by Clarence Stratton, illustrated by Charles K. Stevens (The Macmillan Company, \$2.00). Its dialogue is singularly well done and its setting among the docks and wharves is anything but anæmic.

For little children there are two books of fairy tales and fables which will give almost as much pleasure to those who read them aloud. *The White Cat* by Countess D'Aulnoy, arranged by Rachel Field, illustrated by Elizabeth MacKinstry (The Macmillan Company, \$3.50), is one of several fairy tales from the French. There is a piquancy and delicacy in humor and telling that delights the reader of these stories. One relishes the feline courtesies. The Prince does not fail to kiss the paw of the white cat in farewell!

The other book for little children is by Dhan Gopal Mukerji and is entitled *Hindu Fables*. The book is cleverly illustrated by Kurt Wiese (E. P. Dutton & Co., \$2.50). The only fable with local setting is that of a wild deer and his escape from New York City's zoo. It is so spiritedly told, with such an understanding and appreciation of the tastes of the stag for freedom, for woods, for sweet brooks. The rest of the fables are placed in the setting whence they originated—India. There are stories of

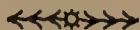
such clever bunnies (and how appealing bunnies are to all young children), and the story of Raghu, and others. I read these stories with leisurely pleasure. There is only one criticism I would make. The author means his audience to be between the ages of four and eight. The language is too difficult for the four-year-old; tricky words such as "sinister" have not yet found their way into their vocabularies. Rather would I raise the ages—even letting boys and girls of nine and ten and eleven read them too, for they have a charm and a rhythm which will not confine them within too strict an age distinction.

A book for parents of young children which I recommend enthusiastically is by William E. Blatz and Helen Bott, entitled *Parents and the Pre-School Child*. There is a foreword by Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg (William Morrow and Company, \$3.00). This book is so very sane, so very practical and has such a sense of balance and proportion, and such a freedom from vague theorization that I delight in its wise normality. My space for further description is now exhausted but I am not exaggerating when I apply to this book the all-embracing word of "comprehensive."



THE LITERARY SCENE

LITERATURE AND SOCIAL LIFE



IN a number of recent books the influence of social forces upon literature has been stressed. In fact, one may even say, in the light of past developments in this direction, that this tendency in our criticism is rapidly developing into a trend. Of course it should not be thought that such social criticism is new. Men as diverse as Taine, Brunetière, Grillparzer, Pisarev, and Plekhanov advanced the social outlook upon literature.

In late years this attitude and outlook have gained headway in English and American literature. J. M. Robertson, Herbert Read, and J. F. Horrabin in England, for instance, have emphasized the importance of sociological analysis in the interpretation of literary phenomena, and more recently Wyndham Lewis has become an apostle of the sociological school. In America men like Lowell and Brander Matthews—I refer the doubting reader to Matthews' *Gateways to Literature*—stressed social and economic forces in their criticism, but without attempting to work their observations into a system. Floyd Dell in *Literature and the Machine Age*, and Upton Sinclair in *Mammonart* and *Money Writes* have exploited the social and economic approach in extensive detail. Walter Long has carried this outlook successfully into the field of American drama, and C. V. Boyer has dealt in the same style with the poetry of the agrarian revolution. Joseph Vanzler has done effective criticism in pursuit of the same method in the materials of Greek art, and critics like Von Klenze and Kuno Francke have subjected German literature to the same type of analysis.

In E. E. Kellett's *Whirligig of Taste*, Solomon Liptzin's *Lyric Pioneers of Modern Germany*, and Joshua Kunitz's *Russian Literature and the Jew*, we are confronted with three more books which have appeared in recent months that stress the same social outlook. While Kellett's ingenious interpretation of changes in taste are not strictly social, it is the social motif that underlies most of his conclusions. In commenting upon Kipling, for example, Kellett shows that "much of [his] inspiration comes

from the vast growth of machinery," and moving on to Whitman he notes that what is important in Whitman's poetry "sprang from the advance of a great stream of social life, which might be regarded, with some justice, as the most materialistic the world has ever seen." In brief, Kellett endeavors to show that "literary taste is the creature of the age"—nothing more and nothing less.

Both Liptzin and Kunitz in their respective studies extend Kellett's method by examining the age. Liptzin examines the age of modern German literature, analyzing its criss-cross of social currents, and indicating in just what ways modern German writers are the inevitable expression of this age. The lyrics, dramas, and novels of German literature, for example, that grew out of the weaver-motif, the struggle between employers and employees, all precipitated by the rise of the machine and the quick extinction of the manual craftsman, Liptzin discusses in illuminating detail. He carries his study through the early period, the poetry of protest, to which even Friedrich Engels contributed, to the dramas of Hauptmann and Toller.

In *Russian Literature and the Jew*, Joshua Kunitz has used the Jew as the basis of his social interpretation of Russian life and literature. In an astute and subtle manner, he has analyzed all the attitudes of Russian authors toward the Jew in respective periods of change and crisis. In these attitudes, one can trace the evolution of a literature and a people.

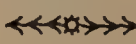
It is by such criticism as these volumes represent that we can detect the rise of the social outlook in literature, and the growing linkage of literature with life.

V. F. CALVERTON
Book Review Editor.





WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN



BRYAN. *M. R. Werner.* Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$3.50.

IT is a really picturesque, significant, and instructive roll, that of the great and able, as well as little, men, who have tried long and often and tragically for the Presidency of the United States. The most notable trio is of course Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, among the greatest men the country ever produced, yet all three defeated again and again. James G. Blaine is another striking example. But surely no other man ever made himself quite so repeatedly conspicuous in that dramatic and passionate quest as William Jennings Bryan. Something essentially theatrical in the nature of the man, something in his vast and secure hold upon the great body of the people, gave his failures an impressive and typical quality that hardly attaches to any one else in such a degree.

Curiously enough, Bryan's life was largely a record of failure. He began by championing free silver, made his first and perhaps most picturesque campaign on that issue, failed—and free silver in the end was completely wiped off the political map. In the same way Bryan was a mighty and energetic champion of Pacifism, yet, somehow, what he practically accomplished for it was—null. In all his long and busy career he held but one executive office, that of Wilson's Secretary of State, and in all the ample record of failure none was more cruel or more disastrous than this. To be sure, Bryan early attached himself to Prohibition, and Prohibition did succeed—or has it failed? In any event, it may be doubted whether Bryan had much to do with it. Fundamentalism may triumph in the end, but if so, it will be quite as much in spite of Bryan as because of him.

Yet, for all this long string of particular failures, it cannot be said that Bryan's career was a failure as a whole, at least he would hardly have admitted it. He had been an enormous influence upon the minds and hearts of men—of some men—and surely this is what counts. In this influence there were two mighty and significant elements. First there was the tongue. What made the power of the tongue in Bryan's case it might be difficult to analyze, but incontestably it was there, and, swayed vast audiences whithersoever it would. And besides the tongue, there was a certain understanding of common human nature.

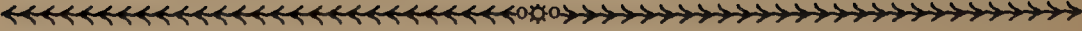
For Bryan knew common human beings, because he was a common human being himself, and Mr. Werner's biography brings this out with extraordinary artistic skill and effectiveness. The biographical method already developed in *Barnum* and *Brigham Young* is brought in this book to the highest point of perfection. Only one who has worked long and arduously in just such attempts can thoroughly appreciate the patience, the forethought, the ingenuity of adjustment, with which this vast mass of material has been sorted, arranged, combined, eliminated, and contrasted, so as to produce upon the reader in the end the complete impression of a human character and a human life. There is no elaborate or subtle analysis of motive, there is no extensive disquisition upon minor episodes, irrelevant or supporting characters. The biographer simply stands aside and lets his subject tell his own story, as often as possible in his own words, making always such judicious selection of anecdote and incident as will most clearly and most effectively bring out the salient and enduring features of the soul.

If there is a weak point in Mr. Werner's treatment, or rather in his sympathy, it seems to me to lie in the handling of Bryan's religion, or more especially of the Fundamentalist Controversy. A furious irritation with the fathomless stupidity of Bryan's position is perhaps natural to a critic like Mr. Werner, but in the tempest of irritation he overlooks a little the strength of the Fundamentalists in the fact that, after all, Darwin did do some awful things to the profoundest necessities of the spiritual life.

Which does not in the least mean that Mr. Werner has not written an admirable story of an important and picturesque career, as important in what it did not accomplish as in what it did, and it is not often that any life story is told with more vividness, or more picturesque variety of human truth.

GAMALIEL BRADFORD





THE OLD MR. WELLS



THE SHORT STORIES OF H. G. WELLS. Doubleday, Doran and Company.
\$5.00.

THERE is no book to which I have looked forward lately with the enthusiasm that possessed me when I heard that all of Mr. Wells's short stories were to be collected within a single volume. Many of the novels had lost their charm and importance for me, as I believe they have for most people; and a good while ago I ceased to look upon Mr. Wells as a prophet whose gifts of insight were in any way mysterious. In a word, I was willing to subscribe to the detraction with which Mr. Wells in his major aspects is meeting almost everywhere. But I did suppose that the earlier things, the shorter things, the things he wrote in the heat of self-discovery and in the flowering-time of his imagination, would still be good. I remembered the excitement with which I had devoured *The Time Machine and Other Stories*, *The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents*, *The Plattner Story and Others*, *Tales of Space and Time*, and later on *Twelve Stories and a Dream*. And since much of this material has not been easily available in America recently, or at any rate since I did not possess it, I was all the more eager to go wandering through the very copious volume which I knew this one would be. I was sure I should not be disappointed.

And I was not. If anything I was surprised the other way. Each of the separate collections had been remarkable in itself; the whole collection turns out in my estimation to be greater than the sum of all its parts. This book I believe to be not merely Mr. Wells's best contribution to our literature, but one of the best of all modern books in the English language.

Not that everything in it has lived. There is some significance, surely, in the fact that I tended to skip through those stories—once so typically Wellsian and therefore so “important”—which contain or imply a criticism of society. The Utopian things do not go any longer with me. “The Time Machine” has too much to do with the future. So has “A Story of the Days to Come,” and so have several other tales that actually take on now a kind of old-fashioned aspect, that wear an overcoat of tarnish. And much of the “scientific” stuff is equally feeble—which is to

say, of course, comparatively feeble, since Mr. Wells always writes well. The stone-age stuff—"The Grisly Folk," for instance, and "A Story of the Stone Age"—I could not wade through at all. It seemed so definitely a by-product of Mr. Wells's probably none too profound researches into the antiquity of man, and was based so clearly upon information that no one possesses too securely anyhow, that I could nowhere have that sense of being at home that I have come to desire when I read fiction. This much, then, was disappointing—or rather, it was what I might have expected it would be.

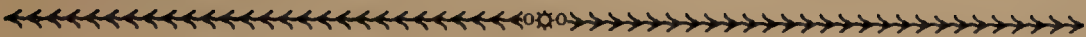
The rest of the book, however, and indeed most of it, is the work of a genius at his happiest. Mr. Wells at his happiest is not very closely concerned with the world as other people know it, even with the world as people see it when they become socially minded. At his freest and best he is kicking up his heels and running beneath another sun entirely, beyond all the mountains we are in the habit of accepting as the boundaries of our imagination. "The Door in the Wall" only suggests such a universe, but "The Country of the Blind"—allegory though it may be of moral things like intolerance—takes us directly there, and so does "A Dream of Armageddon," along with many others. It is a fine world, this world of Mr. Wells's capricious making; and it is not, thank heaven, Utopia. It is the product, simply, of an excellent and passionate imagination kicking free. Some of the simpler scientific yarns, such as those about the strangling orchid or the æpyornis eggs or the deep-sea diving ball, are little more than trifles—stunt stories—and I am not speaking of them. I am speaking, I realize, of those numerous tales in which Mr. Wells has explored the recesses of the emotion of terror. Now fear is presumably one of the emotions which he would rule out of his Utopia; it is an emotion of which, writing as a social philosopher, he would disapprove. He must regret that it is present in our constitution. Yet here, as an artist, working with what exists and obeying the inescapable impulses of his temperament, he literally revels in the medium of terror. "The Red Room" is a regular ghost story, and a good one; "The Cone" is an appalling story of revenge; "Under the Knife" does all that can be done with a man on the operating table; and "A Dream of Armageddon," in many ways the best of all these tales, makes terror not only terrible but beautiful.

I have not spoken of the humorous pieces. Some of them are rather flat now, but "The Purple Pileus," "The Sad Story of a Dramatic Critic,"

"The Truth about Pyecraft," and "Mr. Skelmersdale in Fairyland" are surely among the best of their kind; and in "Miss Winchelsea's Heart" we get perfect observation of the human animal as it exhibits the minor vice of affectation.

MARK VAN DOREN





GENIUS AND MELANCHOLIA



HERMAN MELVILLE. *Lewis Mumford*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.
\$3.50.

WHERE Raymond Weaver's life of Melville was a pioneer work, the result of research that brought to light a number of then unpublished manuscripts, Mr. Mumford's is a critical biography, and critical at that in the philosophic sense. Indeed the reader who is unsympathetic toward Melville's work will accuse him of expanding the sorely-tried, misunderstood, at times melancholic or even hysterical empirical Melville into an avatar—a twin avatar with Whitman—of the American culture which may yet be, but which was frost-bitten by the devastation of the Civil War.

Melville was born in 1819 of the union between an importer of French goods, of respectable family, and a mother of better family—the Dutch Gansevoorts. Both parents were so much within the limitations of their social type that Mr. Mumford feels justified in referring to them—in the capacity of parent—as “monsters” and from their limitations as well as from the poverty in which Melville grew up—after his father's bankruptcy and death—he would derive much of Melville's early difficulty in adjusting himself to life.

For Melville was not only to suffer from the inadequacy of his parents as parents but after his father's death he was to experience a life of poverty, made bitterer by the kindly patronage of his rich uncles and cousins, the Gansevoorts. At fifteen he was given a job as bank clerk by an uncle. He left that to become a clerk in a hat store which his brother had opened. Then he taught school, and then made his first voyage—to Liverpool and as a sailor. Between that terrible experience—for he was badly treated at sea and saw in England only the inferno-like haunts of sailors and their parasites—he taught again, read a good deal, and did some very bad writing:

“Thoreau, at twenty, had ideas that would not have done the man an injustice at forty; not so Melville. Melville, like Whitman, resembled a deep well: he had to pump all sorts of muddy water and stale slush to the surface before the crystal liquid began to run.” . . .

And, again like Whitman, even though Whitman is not always given credit for it, Melville was an omnivorous reader. And Mr. Mumford is

sure that he wrote much and destroyed much, for his first book, *Typee*, shows none of his adolescent weaknesses. It was with *Typee* and *Omoo* of course that Melville made his fame, and he began to lose that fame when he refused to stay in the place which his contemporaries had made for him. On his first voyage he had discovered, painfully, that a ship's boy may not talk to the captain. When he wrote *Moby Dick* he was to find that to the mind of the American reader and critic it was unthinkable that a man given a licence to write romantic South Sea Island stories should dare to talk with or about Plato.

For what Melville put into *Moby Dick* is the burden of the most interesting section of Mr. Mumford's biography. To him as to several other critics, and indeed to any careful reader, it is more than a story of whaling. It is a parable of man's life in the natural world. But where other interpretations of the book have been rather arbitrary, Mr. D. H. Lawrence's for example, Mr. Mumford's is symbolic, but in the legitimate sense in which all settings and characters in a poem are symbolic. The white whale not only typifies the malice of brute energy but is in fact that energy. And Ahab's insane desire to kill the whale is a natural and human desire, as well as a symbol of our human desire to fight all that is evil—that is brute chance and therefore malicious. A symbolism so natural that Mr. Mumford is able to say that Melville was only "partly conscious" of it when he wrote that masterpiece.

But *Moby Dick* appeared after Melville had already alienated his readers by *Mardi*, and although Mr. Mumford finds much that is interesting to point to in that book, and although he excuses its "inconsequentialness" by the untoward circumstances in which it was written, he almost fails to make out a case for it. A book which begins as a South Sea travel story and ends as a heavy allegorical fairy tale, from which significance has to be dug with the labor and uncertainty that one might bring to a prophetic book of Blake, is something that Melville's contemporaries may almost be pardoned for boggling at. And through Mr. Mumford's descriptions of and quotations from a number of the later works, it is easily seen that Melville could be a bad writer and an exasperating writer, both in his prose and in his verse. The latter is for the most part very weak indeed.

But his badness was taught him by the times, and what was good in him is for all time: a putting into imaginative terms, terms learned by his own experience, of the black, basic negation that must be taken into account in all our philosophy: the brute maliciousness of things as

symbolized in *Moby Dick*. Or as Melville put it in a poem, the fact that whatever fair thing we do, whatever adventure we set out on:

“ . . . The shark
Glides white through the sulphurous sea.”

Melville's contemporaries failed him, especially Hawthorne, from whom he had hoped much, and Mr. Mumford represents his marriage as less than that of minds in true accord. And so we find him entering on a period of “Timonism” which, however, his biographer is sure never reached the point of insanity. Then he reconciles himself to routine work in the New York custom house, to being forgotten, and only when a legacy comes late in life does he essay to write again—but too late.

He does come at last to a peace—but peace through attrition, and Mr. Mumford represents him as mellowing his stoicism by a philosophy of love: and from it he endeavors to draw a philosophic moral: that we must neither concur in the evils of brute fact nor attack them frontally as Ahab did, but, reversing the Platonic derivation of the phenomenal from the ideal, must use our otherwise self-contradictory and self-satiating living for the creation of something over and above living: Life as eternalized through Form. For, after the Civil War, as we began by saying, our culture, of which Melville and Whitman and Thoreau and Emerson were prophets, was swamped by a formless, insignificant and aimless pseudo-culture. The Melville of Mr. Mumford's book is a sort of crippled Moses who did not even lead a people out of their Egypt but who in his own partial self-reconstruction shows us a way for ours—for ours both individually and socially.

LLEWELLYN JONES





A SOCIAL EVIL



THE CHALLENGE OF THE AGED. *Abraham Epstein*. Vanguard Press. \$3.00.

TWO years ago near the end of their visit to this country I met members of the Australian Labor Delegation. They were a rather conservative group and I half expected to hear echoes of the standardized propaganda about the prosperity of America and the number of automobiles and the height of wages. Not at all. The thing which exercised these men and women was the insecurity of the workers, their utter lack of social defense against unemployment and old age. Of all the industrial countries the United States alone has no form of modern old age assistance, and of large countries it shares this expression of "rugged individualism" with China and India.

This situation has persisted until now, in spite of the fact that incontestable evidence overwhelmingly indicates that one-third of our people, 65 years or over are wholly or partially dependent upon some form of public or private charity. The hit or miss character of that charity has not even the merit of cheapness for Dr. Epstein estimates the cost of the dependent aged at around \$750,000,000.

While there is some inefficient "outdoor" relief under public authorities the main dependence of our states has been the poorhouse. What that means in terms of human well-being Dr. Epstein, without lifting his voice in shrill denunciation, makes abundantly clear by figures and quotations from competent authorities. One of these authorities has declared:

"The study of our system of maintaining a considerable portion of our dependent and defective population has convinced the writer that the poor-farm is the most inhumane institution that exists on the face of the earth. It is unclean, vicious, wicked. It is the shame of states and communities."

Let no one think from these quotations that the book under review is simply a tract against the callous inhumanity of our Machine Age toward the old who no longer can stand the pace of mass production. It is instead a sober, objective, comprehensive and convincing study of the problem of the aged in America and of various forms of pension for their relief. It is packed with figures that must mean something to the dullest imagination. It begins with the question: Is life worth prolonging when in the American industrial system there is less and less place for the

aged either at work or in the homes of their children? It goes on to consider the causes of dependency, the fallacy that it can be cured under existing conditions and existing wages by any possible degree of thrift, and the further fallacy that private corporation schemes will or can go to the root of the problem. Indeed the cost either of keeping up the industrial pace with older workers or of pensioning them off is prodding most industrial concerns into greater care not to get stuck with them. That is, the situation tends still further to shorten the period in which the workers can hope for jobs. Dr. Epstein's detailed studies of wages and the cost of living and of workers' savings are especially to be commended to devotees of Prof. Carver's comfortable gospel for Rotarians that the workers are all becoming capitalists.

At least as valuable as his description of the plight of the aged is Dr. Epstein's compact analysis of different types of public pension and his summary of existing laws. Pension systems may be compulsory or voluntary, limited to certain income groups or universal, contributory or non-contributory. In other words, workers may or may not be forced by some charge against their earnings or a special form of poll tax to contribute to the fund out of which pensions are provided. With admirable impartiality Dr. Epstein gives the conflicting arguments. The immediately practicable movement in the United States is for a non-contributory pension system payable to the most needy men and women 65 years and upward who are not in need of institutional care. The usually suggested maximum is \$1 per day—not exactly enough to invite riotous living or to encourage the workers to grow old in Browning's faith that "the best of life is yet to be."

This very moderate aid, however, is rapidly gaining favor despite the opposition of the National Civic Federation and its acting President Matthew Woll whose influence in the A. F. of L., of which he is a vice-president, has to a considerable extent nullified its support of the legislation which it has repeatedly endorsed on paper. One of our characteristic American reform waves has started. Although both the great parties ignored the subject in the national election of 1928, leaving support of pensions to the Socialists, there has been an epidemic of state legislation, usually of an inadequate sort, this winter. At the beginning of August, 1928, Dr. Epstein wrote in his Foreword:

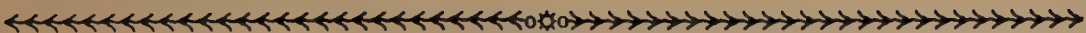
"Seven states have adopted some sort of pension law. From a pragmatic point of view, however, there are few tangible achievements to point to. Only in two states are pensions actually being paid, even to a limited extent."

The Pennsylvania law, for which James H. Maurer and Dr. Epstein himself had fought so gallantly, had been declared unconstitutional by judges eligible themselves to pensions many times over those granted to the workers.

Yet seven months later, in the April Bulletin of the American Association for Old Age Security which Dr. Epstein founded, he could record laws in three new states and encouraging steps toward them in five more, including such populous states as New York, Illinois, California and New Jersey. For such belated progress no small share of thanks must go to Dr. Epstein himself, the Association he formed and the remarkable study which is the subject of this review.

NORMAN THOMAS





TWO PORTRAITS



FRANZ SCHUBERT: THE MAN AND HIS CIRCLE. *Newman Flower*. Frederick A. Stokes Company. \$5.00.

SCHUMANN-HEINK: THE LAST OF THE TITANS. *Mary Lawton*. The Macmillan Company. \$5.00.

THIS biography, the latest of Schubert, avails itself of masses of material newly brought to light and fascinating through its intimate nature. Mr. Flower acknowledges what must have been invaluable help from Professor Otto Erich Deutsch, whose painstaking scholarship has made available long uncovered documents, and he has had the unique fortune among writers on Schubert of the use of the "Luib correspondence," a mass of letters from friends of Schubert written to Luib shortly after the composer's death to help with a biography that was never written.

Schubert research has in the past few years been unusually active, and one might have expected in a book that bulks as large as Mr. Flower's a more revealing picture of Schubert the man and a fuller account of his circle. Figure after figure is presented in a few words, or a page or two, with the hint that here is a man himself interesting enough to warrant a full length portrait; figure after figure sticks his head into the picture for a moment, withdraws it, and comes up again in a different place. Even those friends who were closest to Schubert—Schober, Schwind, Bauernfeld, Mayrhofer—are painted sketchily. One almost has the feeling that the author is holding out on us: the quarrel with Mr. Flower is not so much with the way he has written his book, but with its skimpiness.

Mr. Flower himself has foreseen this criticism. "A very inadequate portrait," he modestly calls his book in the Foreword; "I have . . . dealt only superficially with Schubert's illness," cries a footnote. But why? With the extraordinarily full bibliography given in the book, one might have expected more. Possibly it is still to come, and this volume was put out as a preliminary work so that it might be ready for the hundredth anniversary of Schubert's death.

Even as it stands, it is without a doubt what the publisher's jacket blurb claims it to be: "The standard work in English." Possibly it is even the standard work in any language, for surprisingly little writing

of real merit has been done on Schubert. Mr. Flower has kept carefully away from musical criticism, and so does not lay himself open to comparison with such a superb piece of writing as Donald Francis Tovey's contribution on Schubert to Hubert J. Foss's anthology, *The Heritage of Modern Music*; nor does he fall into the sentimental banalities of the two most recent German biographies of Schubert—Paul Stefan and Karl Kobald. Mr. Flower's is a sane, simple book, full of interesting facts, and based on material which one feels is so rich that the suspicion arises of surface-scratching.

"Above all things, I must not get angry. For God's sake I must not get angry. For if I do get angry I knock all the teeth out of the poor wretch who has angered me."

So said Schubert, and his companion, a little lady much frightened by this tirade, asked apprehensively, "And have you often been angry?"

"No," said Schubert. "Never yet!"

This is one of the all too few passages in Mr. Flower's *Schubert* where the character of his subject—the five-foot-one giant, as Holzapfel called him—seems to be alive for us. In Mary Lawton's *Schumann-Heink* there is not a page on which Madame Heink does not seem to live and be talking to us.

The comparison, of course, is not fair to Mr. Flower. For Miss Lawton's method has involved no research: she has simply lived a while with her subject, taken down notes on her life from her own lips, and reconstructed her personality much in the way that Ethelreda Lewis did for *Trader Horn*. Without the conventional use of misspellings to convey a foreign accent, Miss Lawton has made vivid Madame Heink's German English, recapturing a simple conversational note, by the occasionally foreign word order, a bit of awkward sentence structure here, a too-frequent harking-back to an idea there. Here is an example:

. . . "Yes, I got the great sum of five dollars for appearing in Rubinstein's one-act opera called *The Parrot*, produced at Hamburg in my young days. I made a great hit in it, too. I knew Rubinstein very well indeed. He was a pupil of Liszt and one of the great pianists of all time. I was a regular pet of his, I am happy to say. He used to love me to sing his songs, as he was very fond of the contralto voice. He was already half-blind at this time. He had the most remarkable personality you can imagine. When he looked at you with those deep blind eyes of his, it seemed as if he actually saw through to your very brain. He never *seemed* so blind (as most blind people do) when he looked at you. He was an unforgettable human being. He was one of the great pianists of

the world. People still talk about 'how Rubinstein played!' He wrote a great deal of music also, for orchestra and piano and a number of operas. But only two of them have been done in this country, I believe—*Nero* and *The Demon*, which are very beautiful in portions, but he is thought of here mostly as a pianist."

It is a simple success story: early struggles as the daughter of a poor army officer, first successes, the hard road of the opera singer, marriage, meetings with royalty and other celebrities, reminiscences. It has been a remarkable and romantic career—and a still more remarkable voice, which even now retains much of its old quality and all of its old artistry, as Madame Heink, now in her sixty-eighth year, recently demonstrated in Wagner at the Metropolitan Opera House. And surely Mary Lawton is the most remarkable of ghost writers.

HENRY SIMON.





TWELVE MILLIONS



BLACK AMERICA. *Scott Nearing*. Vanguard Press. \$3.00.

THERE are in the United States today, if statistics do not lie, some twelve million Negroes. The population of the Argentine is not so large, nor that of Holland, nor that of Sweden. Eight million of these dark Americans live in the South. In Georgia alone there are more than a million colored people. In Mississippi 52.2 per cent of the population is Negro. In South Carolina the percentage is 51.4 of the population.

How do they live—these blacks in a country controlled by whites? Nearly two million engage in agriculture; others are in industrial plants doing the heaviest work; others are porters, house-servants, washer-women, day-laborers, bell-boys; and, in comparison to the masses, there is a handful of professional men, artists, and teachers. But do you ever see a black clerk in a store, a colored girl stenographer in an office, a brown cashier in a bank, a Negro street car conductor, or a dark-faced member of the president's cabinet? Not hardly! Practically speaking, all the decent jobs, little or big, important or unimportant, in this country are closed to Negroes. They must make their living almost always at the hardest, dirtiest, lowest paid, and most undesirable labor to be found. They cannot expect advancement. They cannot expect high wages. They cannot even be sure of their jobs. Large hotels in Atlantic City that have been employing colored waiters for years recently discharged them because white people needed the work. In times of industrial depression Negroes are the first to be fired, and the last to be hired again. When the whites walk out, of course, they are used as strike-breakers. But many labor unions deny colored people admittance to their ranks so that they cannot work in certain industries except at times of strike.

In the South the average farm wage is just over \$35 a month without board. In three states it is less than \$30 a month. Many Negroes, working under the share crop system in which the landlord is the bookkeeper, crop salesman, and storekeeper, probably receive even less than \$30. In the North the Negro in industry is often not paid as much as the whites for the same type of work and, as a rule, his wages, if they advance at all, advance at a much slower rate. In the teaching profession this is what

happens to him: in Lexington, Kentucky, the minimum for white high school teachers is \$1,400; the maximum for colored high school teachers is \$1,200. Thus the highest paid Negro teacher in that city receives less than the lowest paid white teacher. Such a wage condition for Negroes is not rare.

Behind so harsh an economic color line, it is little wonder then that the Negro masses live badly or that their death rate is high. Because black men earn so little, most Negro mothers must work, so children are frequently badly cared for and the home life is broken. In the cities Negroes usually live in the oldest and most disreputable quarters while the rents they pay are often as high as 50 per cent more than the rents paid by the white people for similar accommodations. They are frequently forced into segregated black belts, overcrowded and dirty, with little attention from the city's street cleaning or garbage collecting departments. There the youngsters grow up under the worst conditions.

In many parts of the country Negro children attend what are known as separate schools. Accommodations in these schools are almost invariably poorer than those found in the white schools. And in many districts of the South where the greater number of Negroes live, there are no schools at all for Negroes! For the education of each white child in Alabama every year the state spends less than \$27. For the education of each Negro child the state spends less than \$4. Some of the other Southern states do worse. None of them do much better. Where there are separate schools in the North they are usually very much overcrowded and often they are housed in old buildings which the whites have vacated.

Scott Nearing tells you of this in *Black America*. Aided by the latest statistics, by photographs, and by excerpts from social service reports he states simply and clearly, without emotionalism, the position of the Negro in the United States. The white man owns the land on which he works; the white man controls the industries in which he works; the white man's state directs his education, and often directs it poorly; the white man's politics govern him without allowing him, in the South, even a vote. Socially, too, the Negro is an outcast; refused food in public restaurants, Jim-Crowed on the Southern railroads, given the top gallery or the back rows at the theatres if he is admitted at all, served without courtesy in the shops, denied membership in the Y. M. C. A. or the Y. W. C. A. unless there are black branches, and compelled to have his own churches, and sometimes his own burial grounds. In South Carolina

his life is endangered by the mob; in New York he is segregated; in Boston he is not wanted at Harvard; in California as a citizen he has fewer privileges than an Oriental unnaturalized. Continually from birth to death the taunt of being a Negro is forced upon him.

And yet he lives! In Mr. Nearing's book more than a hundred and fifty amazing photographs show him living. They picture Negroes at work in fields and factories, at play, at school, or merely walking on the streets. They show the conditions of Negro housing both rural and urban, and how the back alleys of South Chicago look. (And almost how they smell.) There are included also thirteen actual photographs of lynchings. Four are of a burning at Waco, Texas; and one is of four Negroes hung to the same tree. They are lovely examples of modern barbarism, almost unbelievable in their ugliness. But is it not almost unbelievable, too, that twelve million people should live in an American democracy under a caste system as pernicious in its effects, and as tightly unyielding in its way, as any in India? Yet Scott Nearing with his statistics, his pictures, his excerpts from social service reports, and his own simple comments in *Black America* makes you feel the terrible realness of it all. Mr. Nearing is a white man, but I, being a Negro, will swear that he has not lied.

LANGSTON HUGHES





CONFLICTING GENERATIONS



DARK HESTER. *Anne Douglas Sedgwick.* Houghton Mifflin Company.
\$2.50.

THAT there always is, always has been, and probably always will be conflict of a kind between the generations is a truism. It is also a truism that the conflict has never been more bitter nor more clear-cut than in our own time, which is witnessing the alteration from a world in which hand-labor was of primary importance to one of machine-labor which threatens to become machine-tyranny. Leisure and its graces have been banished by the very machines whose advent was hailed as bringing promise of increased time for these same graces. And those who were in a very special sense the product of leisure and the fine flower of its graces are finding themselves lonely and alone in an alien world. In the lives of women far more than in those of men is this change emphasized, since these have been revolutionized within the past twenty-five years. Therefore the conflict, the lack of understanding between the generations are more sharply defined with women than with men, and it is this lack of understanding that Anne Douglas Sedgwick illustrates in her new, entirely sane and exceptionally fine novel, *Dark Hester*.

Her outstanding character is a woman over fifty; shades of Balzac, who felt it necessary to explain, almost apologize for a heroine of the age of thirty! Monica Wilmott, well born and well bred, is a distinguished example of her generation at its best. When her husband's early death left her a young widow with a baby son, she supported the child and herself, kept a hat shop, wrote articles, lived with the utmost frugality that Clive might go to Winchester and Oxford. She was gracious, charming, lovely to look at, intelligent, generous and broad-minded. But when her son married Hester Blakeston, whom neither Monica nor any of her friends knew, she felt that the girl regarded her as one of those Victorians—anathema to the new generation. And though she did her best, she could not help disliking this cool, self-possessed Hester, so efficient, so entirely a free lance, who went straight for what she wanted, and took it. At the very last, each woman analyzes the situation from her point of view, a situation aggravated by the most

difficult of human relationships. Though the author gives Monica the final word, and with it the suggestion of a happy ending to the book, one feels that Hester is right in declaring herself "too different", Hester who sees that "there are deeper things in life than sex," and that one of these is the ideal a loved mother impresses on her son's mind, another that tradition of type and inheritance which is a part of one's very blood and bones. This is a matter of unlikeness in individuals rather than in generations, yet the difference in periods also plays its part, and here it is Monica who shows the more penetrating insight. She is the first to realize that Hester had roots which "ran as deeply in hers as in any human heart," though she could cut away those roots with the same ruthless efficiency she displayed in so many other ways. "They did not believe in roots, Hester and her generation; they believed in the swift, unflinching adaptability that roots menaced or made impossible." In this attitude of mind she sees that which makes Hester the future, as she herself is the past. "Roots meant sweetness, security, sameness; . . . continuity and bondage. They gave you as reward a flower. . . . Hester's world . . . was a world . . . of things you made and used and cast aside."

In this new novel, Mrs. de Sélincourt has achieved what many strive for and few accomplish; she has written an interesting story of individuals who are flesh-and-blood human beings, at the same time making their history one of more than individual significance. Monica and Hester are distinctly characterized; each is a person, yet each is also typical of a generation. So, too, is the older man, Godfrey Ingpen, typical in his attitude towards women of the men of his class and period; typical also in his pessimism, his insistence that "beautiful things come to an end and are broken," perfectly human in his pain and bitterness. It is in molding the colorless Clive that the author's hand would seem to have lost its cunning; or is his weakness, his stupidity, the flabby futility so well symbolized in that concluding scene, when he lies prone on his bed while the two women settle their own affairs—and his—across his supine body, also typical? Typical at least of the masculine as it appears in present-day fiction, where it is difficult to find a "*jeune premier*" who has as much backbone as a jellyfish. Yet Clive's love was what both women wanted.

That the book is very well written goes without saying. It has dramatic scenes, characters worth knowing. It tells a story of popular

interest, yet one which epitomizes an important part of the new epoch. "Dangerous; but they accept danger," comments Monica at the last, when she has won through to understanding. *Dark Hester* deserves a high place among the notable novels of the year.

LOUISE MAUNSELL FIELD



PURPLE BIOGRAPHY



HENRY THE EIGHTH. *Francis Hackett*. Horace Liveright. \$3.00.

ANY book dealing with Tudor and Elizabethan England holds fascination for me, no matter how "brilliantly" written. I confess, however, to a preference for the chaste and sober in biographical and historical style, and I object to our present-day tone of superiority when we "explain" patly the motives and faults of men and women who above all were not naïve. Francis Hackett does not trip up as did Lytton Strachey when he accused Francis Bacon of an incredible simplicity in matters of self-knowledge, but he has over-written his theme. His style is decoratively verbose, and occasionally downright heavy and unclear. "His disappointment was not confined to non-conductivity" is a pedantic sentence, and there are numerous stoppages like it in the smart abundant flow of journalese and "fine" writing.

But it would take much more than a somewhat excessive style to keep readers away from *Henry the Eighth*. The book is highly impressionistic, and a large public enjoys impressionistic history and biography. The author has tried to be "then-minded," which in practice seems usually to mean interpreting the past in terms of today, and we like apparently to see Marco Polo as a George F. Babbitt and, in this case, Henry the Eighth as a modern dynast, akin to a lard or beef magnate of our decades. And there is, I believe, in Henry's instance a good deal in this view. But it's more than our transient tastes that make us respond to *Henry the Eighth*. It's the richness of the period in which he was moulded that draws us most powerfully.

He himself appears to me as rather stupid, but interesting for exhibiting the effects on behavior when wealth, power, and kingly prestige converge on one who is in himself nothing extraordinary. The strong men, conscious manipulators of human psychology, were around him, and it is they, Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, who attract the eye. The precursors of the New Learning, such as Sir Thomas More, spread our gaze still wider and leave us to reflect on the times when the "intellectuals" really had some power, when they were in the vortex where social power was being generated and could attempt to direct or modify or nullify its impulses.

In short, Francis Hackett had many advantages inherent in his subject. Splendor, court intrigue, amours, and sexual mysteries, rebellions, wars, court-martials, dying speeches and beheadings, a riot of unleashed impulses and an intricate net of craft, the spice of Anne Boleyn's character, the humaneness of Erasmus, the grace of Thomas Wyatt, the pageantry of the Field of the Cloth of Gold—who (except Clement Wood, one must regretfully add) could fail to make a book out of these that would cause forgiveness for all its faults?

True enough, *Henry the Eighth* invites the critic to delicate clinical analysis. Which method is to be preferred for biographical writing—Plutarch's or Suetonius's? How far can the "new" biography approach the technic of the historical novel? Do we know enough, have we fine enough instruments, to become truly "then-minded"? These are questions that accompany the enjoyment of the critical reader, and the attempt to answer them is in itself enjoyable. We have hailed enthusiastically the new style biographies. The mingled merits and excesses of *Henry the Eighth* suggest that we begin to try to weigh them with more care.

GORHAM B. MUNSON

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MR. LEWIS RECONSIDERS

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DODSWORTH. *Sinclair Lewis*. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.50.

VIEWING Sinclair Lewis's later writings in the aggregate, it is possible to consider *Dodsworth* as the third and crowning peak of a trilogy, of which *Main Street* and *Babbitt* are the antecedents. It dispels completely those fears, fostered by the appearance of *Elmer Gantry*, that Mr. Lewis had become too soured to see any problem completely and see it whole, for here is not only a very wise and consummate study of a certain phenomenon in American marriage but, also, a revision of an old bogey he had himself created. *Dodsworth* seems to me to be a new portrait of George Babbitt, and a better one.

There is no question here of retraction. Mr. Lewis's indictment of the American Babbitt is neither weakened nor invalidated by the fact that this later figure is a warmer, broader, and essentially superior conception. One has always felt about Babbitt that he was too much a caricature to be a man, too typical to be an individual. Sam Dodsworth, on the other hand, is certainly possessed of three dimensions. He is tremendously proud of his achievements as an automobile manufacturer, but he feels, too, the confines of his rut and the inherent necessity for new experiences. He likes whiskey and poker, but he likes, too, Masereel woodcuts, Chesterton, Schubert, Corot, Dickens. He is addicted to much bluff and hearty babbitttry, but he is disposed, also, to a contemplative mood and a self-analysis which were never permitted to the original George F. There are suggestions throughout the book that Mr. Lewis has come around not only to a more tolerant and sympathetic state of mind but to an actually appreciative one, not unlike Booth Tarkington's attitude toward his plutocrat.

In *The Plutocrat*, we will remember, Mr. Tarkington advanced the idea that our American man of affairs possesses not only the vices of conquest and achievement, but their virtues also, hinting at the Roman as prototype. Mr. Lewis, although far from such adulation, is giving the devil, now, more of his due. He admits to Dodsworth's early achievements "the dignity of a craftsman." He describes a Mr. Alec Kynance, corporation president, as "a small, bustling man with a large head, an abrupt voice, a *lively mind*—" The italics are my own, but the phrase signifies,

I think, a new point of view for Sinclair Lewis. Most important of all, it is emphasized in chapter after chapter, keenly and accurately, that whatever Sam Dodsworth may say, he thinks of more than he says. One paragraph must be quoted, and the transition from *Babbitt* will appear at once.

"He did not show it; he played steadily, a rectangular-faced, large man, a cigar gripped in his mouth, cards dwarfed in his wide hand; but he was raging within: 'I've been doing what people expected me to, all my life. Football in college, when I'd as soon've stuck in the physics laboratory. Make money and play golf and be a good Republican ever since. Human cash-register! I'm finished! I'm going!' But they heard from him only 'Whoop you two more. Cards?'"

We are getting inside of *Babbitt*, are we not?

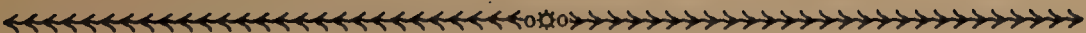
Sam Dodsworth does not hold the center of the stage alone, for this is no one-character book. Whether or not Mr. Lewis had intended to refashion his early caricature, his primary concern, here, has certainly been with an analysis of one very painful type of marriage, and of its dissolution. Fran Dodsworth is that hateful, nagging, self-centered if not parasitic wife whom it might be very easy to hiss had not the honesty and truth of her presentation made her more than mere villain of the piece. There is no indication of that extravagantly furious hatred which distorted *Elmer Gantry* out of all believable proportion. It is not that Mr. Lewis dislikes Fran the less, but that he tempers the dislike more with an understanding of just those qualities in her which combine to destroy the peace and, eventually, the marriage of Sam Dodsworth, without necessarily assigning to her any viciousness or wilful evil. The result is a positively devastating, full-length portrait of an American wife, charming, selfish, snobbish, vacillating, unbearable in her "zig-zag incalculability, her ambitions and desires that seem not worth the pains, her veiled resentments of hurts he had not meant to inflict, her amiability when he had expected her to be angry—"

She could make of this simple, adoring husband a very miserable hulk of self-conscious inferiority. "She could make him feel so unintelligent that he would be silent all evening. The easy self-confidence which weeks of industrial triumph had built up in him she could flatten in five seconds—" And yet there was that hold she exercised, the ability to get him back, to call upon the apparently endless reservoir of his love, with a very effective and affecting naïveté and wistfulness, which never

failed to conquer his moments of rebellion. She is so real, so complete, that it is impossible to hate her, but possible only to look on aghast at the mess she makes of their marriage.

Space allows no full discussion of detailed plot or locale, which is just as well since these will already have been treated in earlier reviews. I have contented myself with indicating the greater triumphs of this book, the creation of character and the analysis of a problem in incompatibility. That Mr. Lewis can do both of these, with that zest and brilliance which are his, is only further evidence of his rank as first of American novelists. If *Dodsworth* is not as artistically satisfying a book as *Arrowsmith* (and what novel since written has been?) it is easily second best, which is meant to be very high praise indeed.

N. L. ROTHMAN.



SCIENCE AND TABOO



SEX IN CIVILIZATION. *Edited by V. F. Calverton and S. D. Schmalhausen.*
The Macauley Company. \$5.00.

THE post-war interest in sex, both principally and theoretically, has been notable in all the countries that were belligerents, but it has been most noticeable in Germany and the United States. In America the subject seems to have become almost an obsession with reformers and reactionaries alike. There can, however, be little doubt that in the end, as a result of all the discussion and hysteria, some mode of life will be reached which will be less cruel and less wasteful of human potentialities of happiness than the old system for which the reactionaries are still fighting. This book is a symposium of thirty-two contributors, most of them modern in their point of view, but a few quite old-fashioned. The most notable of the latter is Professor McDougall. A very characteristic thing in this article is that, in a discussion of Isadora Duncan's unhappy later years, it does not occur to him that her unhappiness could have had any connection with the death of her two children in an accident. This may be taken as typical of the outlook of those who are always prating about maternity as the sole function of Woman.

After an introduction by Havelock Ellis dealing largely with the dubious benefits of mechanisation, the book opens with two anthropological articles, one by Briffault on "Sex in Religion," and one by Alexander Goldenweiser on "Sex and Primitive Society." Both of these articles are full of interesting matter. Then comes an article on "Woman in Transition," by Mrs. Forbes-Robertson Hale and next the aforesaid article by Professor McDougall on the question "Should all Taboos be Abolished?", to which question, as might be expected, he gives a negative reply. One feels that if he dared he would say no taboo should be abolished. Several articles deal with the question of sex enlightenment for children and young people, and there is an admirable article on "Sex in Education" by Harry Elmer Barnes. We then come to "Sex and Psychoanalysis," in which four articles present the psychoanalytic point of view, while one is a thorough-going but rather unconvincing criticism of Freud. The next section, on "The Clinical Aspects of Sex," discusses many important topics in an enlightened manner. There is first a very persuasive ar-

ticle by Mrs. Sanger on "Birth Control," then a discussion on "Sex in the Adolescent Girl" by Phyllis Blanchard, which contains a considerable amount of case material. Then comes a very interesting discussion on "Physical Disabilities in Wives," and the book ends with "Sex in Poetry and Fiction," which is the only part of the book that strikes me as seriously inadequate. The connection of sex with art, with mysticism, with literary culture and with men's attitude towards life in general, raises difficult questions. They are none the less important for being difficult. Is all hard work and difficult achievement bound up with sadistic social systems? Who knows? Miss Mead has written a fascinating book showing how happy the Samoans are owing to the paucity of their sex taboos, but it is possible to urge, as McDougall does, that this very happiness and freedom is connected with the unprogressive character of their society. I do not myself accept the view that all good work is due to pain and repression, but at the same time I can see a good deal to be said in favour of this view, and I think it very necessary that advocates of reform should tackle this question if they are to make their case unanswerable.

The editors are to be warmly congratulated upon their courage in undertaking so vast an enterprise and their success in carrying it through. The book is packed full of information which educated people ought to have but frequently do not have, and I have repeatedly found, in reading it, enlightened and civilized points of view on matters concerning which it is very rare to find anything in print except ignorant barbarity.

The book is to be recommended wholeheartedly to all who wish to base their opinions about sexual questions on reason, not on prejudice and tradition. Fortunately the number of such persons is increasing very rapidly. I say fortunately, since the traditional opinions in this sphere have almost nothing to recommend them except that they afford an apparently justified outlet for the sadism of the ultra virtuous.

BERTRAND RUSSELL



A REVIEW OF REVIEWS

CAVENDER'S HOUSE. *Edwin Arlington Robinson*. Macmillan. \$2.00.

"It is no small part of the genius of Edwin Arlington Robinson that the mood of a poem should hover and dominate in the very texture of his lines. Primarily, of course, the mood is determined by the theme of the poem, the thought behind the line or lines. Secondly, it springs from the figures used, it resides in the words employed. But, lastly, a mood can be heightened, and maintained in added measure, by cunning collocations of sound; and, without stopping to analyze any one line to prove that Mr. Robinson exercises this cunning, it may be said that it is proved on every page of *Cavender's House*. The somberness, the dark austerity of the opening passage will be found to continue to the very end of the poem. And in many of the deeply tragic passages of the Arthurian story the effect is the same as in the present poem. But whenever in *Tristram* variation in the theme provided opportunity for variation in mood Mr. Robinson utilized such opportunity to the utmost. Hence in that epic there is light as well as shadow. As there is no light in Cavender's soul, only remorse and tragic darkness, there is none in the poem *Cavender's House*. It is to be hoped that this admission will not deter the reader, however; and if it does the loss will be his. He will miss a creation deeply and majestically beautiful."

Percy Hutchison
N. Y. Times

"Both his debt to Browning and his extreme divergence from this master are freshly attested to in Robinson's latest poem, a lengthy piece which combines character drawing with dramatic narrative in a fashion which is this poet's peculiar forte. There is something distinctly Browningsque about the manner in which Cavender, the chief person in the poem, is made to reveal himself in a dialogue whereof he is both participants, though he clothes his interlocutor in the form of the wife who met death at his hands. . . .

"Cavender is made to probe his own wounds with deadly skill, to bare himself to his own shuddering gaze with fiendish completeness. One 'gets' him, as one gets Bishop Blougram and Andrea del Sarto's lady and the duke who was so hot to have his last duchess painted to the life. And again, one gets him differently—with just those shades of difference that distinguish one great poet from another.

"The whole piece is bathed in the atmosphere that seems native to Robinson: an atmosphere

of luminous darkness, transparent clouds, palpable shadows."

Babette Deutsch
N. Y. Herald Tribune



AS GOD MADE THEM. *Gamaliel Bradford*. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.50.

"Is it possible that, in these days, we are all 'petty men'? Why should we enjoy so hugely the efforts of denigrating biographers unless because they permit us to read about our Caesars and say, 'Tis true, this god did shake'? There is cold comfort for Cassius in Gamaliel Bradford's new book. Bradford, who used the method now associated with Lytton Strachey before Strachey did, and who coined the word 'psychography' to describe his own work, has written brilliantly of seven Nineteenth Century Americans, and has not only testified to the solidity of their achievements and virtues, but also discovered the qualities of their defects."

Frances Lamont Robbins
Outlook

"Gamaliel Bradford has given us another series of illuminating character studies. In unrelated sketches he presents Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Horace Greeley, Edwin Booth, Francis James Child and Asa Gray—statesmen, editor, actor and scholars whose lives span those disjointed years from 1777 to 1896. Events and backgrounds are reduced to a minimum and a dissecting pen cuts away the personal non-essentials in an effort to reveal these men 'as God made them.' The understanding is high, the writing excellent. One may not always agree with the interpretations, but it is a relief in these days to find something of honest research presented in such readable fashion."

Avery Craven
N. Y. Herald Tribune

"*As God Made Them* is the title given to a book of studies of Nineteenth Century Americans by Gamaliel Bradford. Here we have the new biography at its best. These essays are pen portraits done with the characteristic Bradfordian grace, penetration, and good taste. As representative politicians—or statesmen as we like to call them now—Mr. Bradford portrays Webster, Clay, and Calhoun. Closely associated with these is Horace Greeley, the journalist, and the other Victorians who have places in the gallery are Edwin Booth, Francis Child, and Asa Gray. These were all

Americans of distinction and leadership in their time, greatly as they differed from one another. It is another evidence of Mr. Bradford's rare gifts as a biographer that with characters so varied as these he seems on equal terms. He is quite at home with all of them."

William B. Shaw
Review of Reviews



RICHARD BURDON HALDANE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY. Doubleday, Doran. \$5.00

"Readers of this book in every country outside England will go to it for light upon British policy and the course of European events after 1905, when Haldane took the War Office in the Liberal Cabinet formed by Campbell-Bannerman. Haldane had a passion for the public service; he was extraordinarily disinterested; his energy and industry were astounding. The chronicle of his activities, maintained while pursuing the two exacting careers of politics and the law, is amazing. He found in work the secret of full happiness. He was the only British statesman of the time who believed in systematic training, social organization, and scientific administration; and he was hopeful enough to work for engrafting these things upon the English tradition. He joined the Labor Party mainly because he thought its best elements were devoted to the cause of education and freedom of the mind. He was a very distinguished and successful public man, and the history of the century will show him to have been very important for England. And yet how few are those who ten years hence will know his name! His was a wholly impersonal mind. He said nothing that any of us can remember. And he wrote of himself and his work like a schoolboy."

Nation

"Lord Haldane stands revealed in this fascinating autobiography as one of the most interesting and influential statesmen of the pre-war days in Great Britain. That he was not a great leader who could command popular support for the aims and ideals which he followed faithfully throughout his long life he himself attributes to lack of personal magnetism, and it was without doubt this aloofness from the people which made them so ready to doubt his patriotism at the beginning of the war simply because of his deep interest in German thought.

"Written in a direct and engaging style, Lord Haldane's book deserves a high place among the memoirs and autobiographies of the statesmen concerned with European politics in the pre-war era, not so much because of its contribution to history as because of its value as a frank record of a full, active and highly satisfying life."

*Foster Rhea Dulles
Bookman*

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD.
Bertrand Russell. Norton. \$3.00.

"A new book by Bertrand Russell is always exciting, and his latest will prove especially so to those who are of a speculative turn of mind. It is the reworking and amplification of the Lowell Lectures which Mr. Russell delivered on the same subject in 1914. In it he sets forth the answers that modern science and mathematics have to offer to the soluble problems of metaphysics. It is a difficult book, of course, although written in Mr. Russell's admirably clear style."

Herschel Brickell
North American Review

"It must be said that *Our Knowledge of the External World* is not a book for the uninstructed general reader. A special taste for abstract logic and for the problems of epistemology, so repugnant to the majority of even intelligent people, will be required to understand and enjoy it. The common reader will not find in it, as he found in *Philosophy*, published in 1927, an exposition of modern thought and knowledge addressed to his capacities."

*Theodore Morrison
Bookman*



FURTHER POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON. *Edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson.* Little, Brown.
\$2.50.

"Mrs. Martha Bianchi's biography of Emily Dickinson did not, except by hints and oblique references, disclose all of Emily Dickinson's life. Now the publication of more than 150 new poems shows us that the *Complete Poems* were likewise not complete. She has been called by many curious epithets—a nun, a Sappho, a recluse and even, by that prince of dunderheads, the author of the *Ponkapog Papers*, un *poète manqué*, but she was supremely, irresistibly, a creative artist, and this explains many facts which in a grosser existence would have been anomalies."

Lewis Mumford
N. Y. Tribune

"It is a magnificent gift, these *Further Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Why they should so long have been concealed puzzles one; to be sure, it is intimate poetry; but so was everything that Emily wrote intimate poetry. The sister seems to have shown a lack of logic in printing part of the poet's work; she should have refused the world none at all.

"For those who like to make an approach to an artist's work through the life of the artist, especially through the artist's psychology, the poetry of Emily Dickinson offers a beckoning subject. And, indeed, her poetry is so much a part of herself, so inextricably of her life, that

even in a study that endeavors to see it as detached something of biography must creep in."

Percy Hutchison
N. Y. Times



THE AFTERMATH. *Winston S. Churchill.*
Scribner. \$5.00.

"The book is mainly made up of four distinct topics, of which the successive chapters are, rather distractingly, intermixed—the Peace Conference, the Russian Revolution, the Irish Rebellion, and the Greco-Turkish imbroglio. Of these the account of the Russian business is—as one might expect—the least satisfactory. Mr. Churchill does not seek to defend unduly his own part in the fiascos of the Russian civil wars. But he fails to see—or at least to set—in perspective the bigness of the events in their due relations, or to disentangle the essential from casual episodes. He half admits the inevitable futility of the proceedings which he supported; he lets one see the wretched character and effete incompetence of the Russian Whites whom he would have so much liked to idealize ('It was not the want of material means, but of comradeship, will-power, and rugged steadfastness that lost the struggle'); and he quotes Foch, who firmly refused to have anything to do with the affair, as remarking 'with much discernment' that 'these armies of Kolchak and Denikin cannot last long because they have no civil governments behind them.' But the Bolsheviks remain for him, in spite of his tribute to the greatness of Lenin, nothing more than an imbecile atrocity."

J. M. Keynes
New Republic

"*The Aftermath* is the completion of the first ambitious monument to the war. All the other histories, I think, are either mere chronologies, or more or less disguised and inflated magazine articles bound in endless morocco, at any rate spoilt by lack of literary plausibility for any but the more hardened scholars of the future to read, when the urgency of the moment has become blunted. The five volumes, of which this one is the last, will, therefore, in all possibility stop-gap for history until the uneasy spirit of our times is finally appeased by the prayers of authentic genius. That is, for generations to come they will make up their minds about us and our greatest misfortune from what Winston Churchill said—so much the worse for us."

William Bolitho
N. Y. World



THE DECLINE OF THE WEST. VOL. II. *Oswald
Spengler.* Knopf. \$7.50.

"The second volume of Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, is really a gigantic collection of

scholia upon the first unconnected but elaborate notes which sooner or later touch directly or indirectly upon everything in the universe. Certainly no other living writer has so many ideas as Spengler or such a mass of facts at his disposal—in every field: history, philosophy, literature, all the arts and sciences, politics, jurisprudence, etc., etc. His work is an amazing performance of mental jugglery; he keeps a dozen theories in the air at once, holds a score of countries on his open palm and leaps gaudily back and forth across the centuries. Furthermore, most of his tricks are new and more intellectually stimulating than those of perhaps any other contemporary. Who, for example, before him, would have thought of including among the Problems of Arabian Culture a section entitled, 'Pythagoras, Mohammed, and Cromwell'? Yet the collocation is justifiable and even illuminating. If Spengler be a juggler, he is an unsmiling one. There is always meaning in his madness, and it is *muching mallecho*; it means mischief. The juggler is an ominous Titan bent upon pulling down Olympus. His piling of Pelion on Ossa is no mere pastime; it really is an earth-shaking enterprise."

Ernest Sutherland Bates
Commonweal

"Frequent doubts will arise, at fundamental points, but what cannot be questioned is the immense importance of the book and the profound impression it is bound to make in our interpretation of history, in our outlook on the future, in our conception of the meaning of life. For here is one of the mighty books of the century, which, sooner or later, will be read by all who ponder the riddle of existence—a book which is heavy with implications of vital import in spheres lying beyond the confines of history or sociology. Although it should not be uncritically accepted as a new gospel, it is a truly monumental work, at once depressing in its pessimism and exhilarating in its compelling challenge to our accepted ideas."

Arthur D. Gayer
Forum



HENRY THE EIGHTH. *Francis Hackett.* Live-right. \$3.50.

"I read Mr. Francis Hackett's *Henry VIII.*, which is so easily the most fascinating, the best written, and least opinionated biography ever I read in my life. Lord! it makes most other biographies look like the attempts of college students in freshman English."

Franklin P. Adams
N. Y. World

"Francis Hackett's superb 'personal history of a dynast and his wives' follows Shakespeare's lead. It is personal in that it reveals the coils within coils in the powerful simple man about whom it is centered; in the host of beautifully limned

personalities who play in and out of the scenes—wives, sweethearts, popes, cardinals and kings. But it is high tragedy and high comedy as well—no backstairs gossip, no petty fingering of the past to point to its stains with unctuous delight. Whether or not this be history in its narrowly factual sense (on this point I am not competent to speak), Mr. Hackett has written a great book."

Mary Ross

N. Y. Herald Tribune

"If not an old hand at history Mr. Hackett is not without an historical conscience nor without a sense of the past. He is obviously a man of intellectual integrity who was led from other interests into the study of history until he found himself involved, and went at sources, went at them evidently with a terrible persistence and curiosity. Years of work there must be in this book, but happily work that did not destroy an extraordinary quality of imagination but rather fostered it. The author has more skill in seeing a particular past time than many professional historians; he has a feeling of the climates and geography of opinion; he has an uncanny understanding of the English squirearchy—he is Irish born—and of its implications. Nor is that skill only exercised about classes; he sees individuals so vividly in his own mind's eye that we cannot forget his pictures, even if sometimes the colors seem too bright."

Wallace Notestein
Saturday Review



SWORDS AND ROSES. *Joseph Hergesheimer.*
Knopf. \$3.50.

"This book consists in essays on certain conspicuous Southern figures, prefaced by a sensitive paper on the 'Deep South.' The essays are a combination of facts, rather automatically retailed, and fine writing. And just as the fine writing is finer when it serves a fictional purpose, so the facts are more impressive stripped than dressed by these elaborate, facile fingers which shade and color them so definitely."

Outlook

"In *Swords and Roses*, Mr. Hergesheimer's most inspired title, he is once more at home in a world which he loves, a world of simple formalities, of hot, clear, uncomplicated passions, of a code of living which admits only black and white, with no infusion of gray, a code expressed in such unarguable terms for both men and women as honor, courage, fidelity, chastity and loyalty. In his story of the war which on both sides was surely, of all wars, most decent and legitimate, Mr. Hergesheimer is sufficiently the novelist to offer no argument, to hold no brief. But his æsthetic and emotional responses belong to the South, before and during the war, and these responses are beautifully stated."

Emily Clark
N. Y. Herald Tribune

THE RE-DISCOVERY OF AMERICA. *Waldo*
Frank. Scribner. \$3.00.

"The various chapters which compose Mr. Frank's most recent book have appeared serially in the *New Republic* and have already awakened considerable discussion, some of which Mr. Frank answers in the notes and appendices to this book. The book as a whole, however, calls for another type of criticism, a criticism which the publishers incite by certain statements in their jacket blurb. Mr. Frank's book is not 'a complete résumé, in compact form'; the book lacks rather than possesses 'unusual clarity,' and it is not 'a practical study of our future.'

"This book is not, then, an understandable résumé of the past or of the present. What it is is a philosophic interpretation of the past, a philosophic evaluation of the present and a philosophic program for the future, and as a philosophy it is every bit as difficult to read as the works of John Dewey, which Mr. Frank calls 'such hard reading.' His vocabulary is erudite, his style poetic, his reasoning mystical. His 'practical study of our future' is the presentation of a program for individual self-improvement which follows the teachings of the ancient Brahmins and the methods of oriental mystics. His study is so far beyond the comprehension of many readers that even his suggestions can hardly be of great practical value."

A. H. Starke
Chicago Daily News

"In a succession of books, Waldo Frank has explored this problem, and in *The Re-discovery of America* he has outlined a philosophy designed to help us remove the causes of the contemporary chaos, defeat the frustrations encountered in our blind development, and create a new order and a new wholeness. Mr. Frank does not offer us any premature assurance that a 'renaissance' is upon us; nor does he suppose that it will come automatically as we pile up those treasures which the thieves break into and the rust corrupts. On the contrary, he is aware that the mechanical jungle of our life may overpower us, and that we may succumb to its fevers and poisons before we can clear it and make it fit for human habitation. It is with a sense of danger, risk, adventure, that he surveys contemporary America."

Lewis Mumford
N. Y. Herald Tribune



AND THEN CAME FORD. *Charles Merz.*
Doubleday, Doran. \$3.00.

"The book might have been sub-titled 'Glorifying the American Feature Story.' It has all the virtues and a good many of the vices of the front page, Sunday section, of half a hundred American newspapers. Drama, motion, color—that special blend of literary ingredients called for by the recipe for successful newspaper writing

—are packed into its pages until the appetite of the reader to consume them is stimulated beyond any possible sales resistance."

Evans Clark
N. Y. Herald Tribune

"This is a swiftly moving and dramatic summary of the epic career of Henry Ford. It is not only a biography of the man made famous by his Model T, but it also serves as an illuminating account of the effect of modern industrial civilization upon American social development. It is against the background of this development that Mr. Merz tells his story. Even if the volume is not a searching analysis of Henry Ford's mind—and perhaps we shall have to wait for that until all first-hand biographical material has disappeared and it can be safely invented by some psychic biographer—it does cover the external features of Ford's career in a most readable fashion. It is a book which arouses in the reader a desire to ask questions which even Henry Ford himself could not possibly answer."

Outlook

THE BURNING FOUNTAIN. *Eleanor Carroll Chilton.* John Day. \$2.50.

"A terrific storm breaks soon after the novel opens, and synchronized with the lightning and thunder is the conception of Lynne near 'The Tree' on the estate of Donald and Janet Kenwyn. She is born amidst foreboding circumstances in another storm on the Cornish coast, and thereafter the Kenwyns find her a most baffling and awesome daughter. Time passes, but not the mystery of Lynne who appears to be a kind of incarnation of Innocence, self-contained, a wanderer in the out-of-doors, oblivious to social ways of thinking. Another terrific storm closes the book. Lynne has run out in it to 'The Tree' and is killed when lightning strikes it.

"A superficial description of the 'plot,' but a need for brevity obliges it. For the true plot of *The Burning Fountain* is an interior affair, consisting as it does of very little that the characters do and say and very much of their introspections. This unfortunately is a little wearisome."

Gorham B. Munson
Bookman

"If you do not like this novel, it is because you are annoyed by the vagrant ways of thought, because you are fond of categories, because it irritates you to see people torturing themselves from no outward necessity. Against these feelings *The Burning Fountain* will offend not often but continuously, but I cannot think of any other tenet of taste by which it might be condemned. For in it is to be found a blend of such antagonistic qualities as suspense and contemplation, loveliness and rigid reasoning, charm of manner and unmitigated seriousness. It has, moreover, an admirably firm and well planned structure, so that the endless intellectual explorations

of the characters never become mere excursions. Their mental struggles, even their abstract theories, are all eventually bound together by the large and heroically simple outlines of the main problem; and the solution of that problem involves answers to so many of the smaller questions involved that in the end no sense of turbulence or raggedness is left."

Margaret Cheney Dawson
N. Y. Herald Tribune

THIS DELICATE CREATURE. *Con O'Leary*. Eliot Holt. \$2.50.

"We shall not enumerate the several nightmares depicted in this book; there is something like a dozen and a half in all. Each has its moral; and in one and another the writing is momentarily vivid. There is a faint reflection of *Limehouse Nights* in the Boda-parlormaid dream. In the end, the lady awakes, decides to dismiss her lovers, and to give her husband an heir, an idea which had been most distasteful to her before consuming the magic drug."

N. Y. Times

"It takes the artistry of a Virginia Woolf to move serenely through a phantasmagoria. With Mr. O'Leary the result is too often mere confusion. There are altogether too many Henries in the field. The lives follow one another in rather hit-or-miss fashion, with little consecutive reinforcement. Granted that Nirvabogoea is a strange drug, since it is at heart so highly moral a drug one is surely justified in asking that it be also a logical drug. One could wish, too, that its morality were of a somewhat profounder character. Nevertheless, if the book tends to become a series of episodes, these episodes are, many of them, remarkably well done; if the author's generous sentiment toward our brute relatives occasionally leads him into absurdity, one may still be grateful for the generosity; and if the central thought be hardly deeper than that of *The Prince and the Pauper*, it is at least a thought. Mr. O'Leary's attempt to present the fanciful, the sensational, and the horrible, in the service of an abstract idea is of a distinct significance and interest."

Ernest Sutherland Bates
Saturday Review

FALMOUTH FOR ORDERS. *A. J. Villiers.* Henry Holt. \$3.50.

"If you are looking for a genuine book of the sea, without hokum, there is *Falmouth for Orders*, which tells in easy sailor language, the yarn of a race between two sailing craft from Melbourne, Australia, half way round the world to the port of Falmouth. The owners of the two vessels and the members of the crews bet just about everything they had on the race, and it

RANDOLPH BARTLETT

BARTLETT: I'm surprised that you're not a subscriber to The Book League of America.

INTELLECTUAL: I don't want anybody to choose what I'm to read. I want to pick my books for myself.

B: What have you picked recently?

I: *Elizabeth and Essex.*

B: How did you happen to pick it?

I: I read a review in *The Times*.

B: Then you didn't pick it for yourself—the reviewer picked it for you.

I: In a way. But I know Smith's reviews, and I admire his judgment.

B: Then, if you had happened to miss his review, you wouldn't have picked *Elizabeth*.

I: That's absurd. Everybody's talking about the book, and I'd have run into it sooner or later.

B: Then you regard a book's popularity as a sure sign that you will like it. In other words, instead of having it selected for you by one intelligent judge of literature, you accept the opinion of a large number of persons of average intelligence.

I: I can tell pretty well, by what people say about a book, whether I will like it.

B: And you find this system infallible—you are never disappointed?

I: Well—sometimes.

B: And your favorite reviewer, of *The Times*—do you invariably enjoy the books he recommends?

I: Not invariably, of course, but usually.

B: In other words, you really never select a book for yourself. You either take the consensus of opinion, or the reviewer's opinion, or perhaps a bookseller's recommendation—and none of these methods has proved perfect.

I: No, but it's better than having a book come to you without your knowing whether or not you want it.

B: Isn't the truth of the matter that you want to flatter your ego, perhaps subconsciously, with the idea that you discovered the book for yourself?

I: Of course not.

B: I said "subconsciously."

I: No, not even subconsciously.

B: You may be right. . . . But to change the subject, have you ever read any of the literary criticisms of Van Wyck Brooks or Gamaliel Bradford?

I: Yes, and enjoyed them immensely.

B: If either of them happened to be reviewing books for *The Times*, you would accept their judgments as willingly as you do those of Mr. Smith, wouldn't you?

I: Certainly.

B: In other words, you'd be quite willing to have them pick your reading matter for you, in place of Mr. Smith or popular opinion.

I: I tell you I don't want any one to pick—

B: Yes. That's where we started, but we've gone away past that point and proved that you always do have some one pick your reading matter. And the arrangement made by The Book League of America is that this selection shall be done for you, not merely by Mr. Brooks or Mr. Bradford, acting separately, but by both of them, working in conjunction with several other men of the highest literary standing. Are you taking more risk, accepting the judgment of this committee of editors, than when you accept the single opinion of Mr. Smith, or of your bookseller, or of a large number of people whose literary judgment is confined merely to what they personally like or dislike?

I: I want to know what I'm buying before I buy it.

B: I suppose, too, that when you go on a vacation you want to know all about the place you are going to before you arrive. When you are invited to dinner, you always inquire what food will be served, and whether there will be garlic in the salad. You probably detest bridge, because you cannot know what cards you are going to hold before you pick up your hand, or if you do play bridge you undoubtedly annoy the other players by picking up your cards one at a time.

You are depriving yourself of one of the greatest joys in reading—to open a book of which you have never heard, and set out upon a mental adventure, not knowing what each succeeding page will reveal.

My dear fellow, you are not really living in the world today, because

the modern world is built on a foundation of credit. If a man can't establish credit for himself, or extend credit to others, he must go out of business, economically, socially and mentally.

No, it doesn't add up. The truth is that I have seldom met a person so pitifully dependent upon others for the selection of his reading matter as you are. You pretend that you make your own selections, when actually you are accepting second-hand and second-rate advice when first-hand and first-rate advice are offered to you, with the additional inducement of a very considerable saving in money. You are an egotist, and if I must speak the truth, not even a sincere egotist—you are simply kidding your ego.

On the other hand, I am an *egoist*. I believe the entire universe was created to serve me, and not the least of the servants is the organization which lays upon my desk, once a month, a new literary adventure. I have in my possession upwards of four dozen books which have come to me in this way, and of these there is only one that has not afforded me much entertainment. When this record is equalled by your Mr. Smith and your *vox populi*, I shall be glad—

At this point I felt a certain emptiness in the air, and I looked up. My interlocutor was gone. The emptiness remained.

BOOK LEAGUE FORUM

"As a member of The Book League I inserted my leather sixpence into the embroglio which the assembled booksellers have created in Boston over the book club idea. I made specific enough reference to my club but the Boston *Herald* in which this was published deleted the name."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:

The newspaper reader with a sense of humor gets a deal of amusement out of perusing items which show the wily ways in which modern commercialism attempts to disguise itself.

The movie interests, threatened by a modest effort to bring better films to Boston, call out sleeping admirals and paid patriots to yell "bolshivism"; while assembled booksellers denounce in stentorian tones the nefarious book club. It is to laugh.

Since no attempt to better the cinema can ever bring it to the level of interesting intelligent people, the book club situation demands some attention.

I am a member of one such club and that for a very good reason—the only reason, in my opinion, for the existence of such groups. From a book club one buys books at much cheaper prices than the retail bookstore can offer me. What any bookseller in Greater Boston would ask \$2.50 to \$5.00 for, I get for 75 cents. What cooperative efforts always do, i.e. lower costs, the book clubs have accomplished. That constitutes their *raison d'être*, and no amount of denunciation can hide that.

The booksellers might well take their cue from the fate of the retail grocer who fattened on his public until chain-buying produced the cash-and-carry and swept the high price store to destruction.

To vociferate, as Mr. Macrae and others, on the fallacy of "the best book" is just smoke-screen stuff. The Dutton people themselves put out what they call their "book of the month," which is just as artificially boomed as any special of a book club. Few are taken in by such tactics. We all know the advertising boys like to do their stuff, and no one is the worse for it. Thousands smoke a certain brand of cigarettes in spite of, not because of, the wild advertising that brand is constantly getting. Similarly, no intelligent member of a book club really believes the "pontificating" of the several committees that choose the books; but he does think that they may be quite as right as a publisher's reader who is, in the last analysis, the first and last censor of books.

The price of books is ridiculously high; the book clubs have reduced prices for a limited number of books. If the publishers really want

to kill the clubs, let them do likewise. But I miss my guess if they will, any more than the Hollywooders will attempt to battle Artkino competition by making movies that possibly might be meant for better than a moronic public.

Roger Thomas
Boston University
Boston, Mass.

"THE Book League month by month so warmly increases my admiration for the judgment of your editorial board and my enthusiasm for your whole splendid plan that I am urging on my friends in personal meeting and in correspondence to enjoy for themselves the rich personal pleasure I have had from my membership.

"*The Education of Henry Adams* is a splendid companionable piece of book-making, superbly printed and bound. In my opinion that is a poor library which lacks a well-thumbed copy of *The Education*. Here profundity and earnestness of thought, a wide and enlarging experience unite with grace of phrase and charm of expression to make perhaps the most enduring autobiography in American literature.

"*Prima Donna* is a truly beautiful, truly significant contribution to American literature—a remarkable study of a woman's soul. With this selection, I am sure, you must have convinced many hundreds of people that The Book League of America stands shoulders above all other selection committees.

"And especially let me congratulate Mr. Slosson and The League on the rare and splendid selection of Major Hingston's *Instinct and Intelligence*. Give names to these ants and wasps and you have charmingly witty and gently ironic comments on certain political and matriarchal developments of our recent days. I have read no work of science with as continuous enjoyment since the pages of Fabre held me fascinated some years ago.

"*Zola and his Time* is a forward step in American writing of biography. Hardy's *Winter Words* need nothing said. The point

is they are the kind of works which should be read. And they can be with thorough enjoyment."

E. E. McCleish
Chicago, Ill.

"We enjoy works of imagination because these abstractions on life take us from the beaten path. A pathway where we have often suffered defeat. We are right. But an overdose of fiction creates a want for something else. *Instinct and Intelligence* is no soft bread. Facts, I don't agree with Bertrand Russell about the title. *Instinct and Intelligence* at once challenges curiosity. The book nobly satisfies this interest. I think it by far the best you have offered your subscribers so far.

"Intelligence inevitably precedes instinct in evolution. Also, instinct sets intelligence free to range the unknown. Achievement in almost every field proves this. Education as it is commonly produced by educators negatives intelligence, makes an end of instinct, because it dulls the mind with its tasks, often unwelcome. Civilization as we have it in America is handicapped by too many sterile ideas."

Herman E. Gasch
Washington, D. C.

"I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my extreme gratification at the excellent accomplishments of your organization. I cannot imagine anything more worthwhile in the light of cost and quality than your Book League Monthlies which have afforded me unusual pleasure.

"I believe that your publication should have a very large appeal. You may be assured that it will be my pleasure to recommend your organization so far as possible and you have my best wishes of success."

M. Konowitz
New York, N. Y.

"I am delighted with the book (*The Education of Henry Adams*): paper, printing, binding. If the other eleven volumes come up to the level of this in format, they will add marvelous 'values' to my library shelves.

"I am more than satisfied, too, with the Monthly, both with the breadth of selection

and with the quality of each individual work. I tell my friends this and lend this or that issue that they may taste for themselves.

"May all the gods that rule in the realm of letters speed you in this splendid enterprise!"

Clarence H. White
Waterville, Me.

"I have just received *The Education of Henry Adams* and *Instinct and Intelligence*. In regard to the latter, I'm no entomologist, thank God, but don't let thoughts like that about your subscribers keep you from publishing other books as good in comparable fields. There are so many things you are advised to do in letters you have published, and I hope you don't do any of them. Continue to publish the magazine in paper covers and save the more expensive bindings for the old books. Publish books you think are good regardless of whether they are likely to become best sellers or not. Keep up the present assortment of biography, novel, poetry and science.

"I suppose you can make money at this, but I'll be — if I see how. The Adams book looks like a four dollar volume."

Matthew W. Rosa
Linden, N. J.

"Receipt from you of the April number of The Book League Monthly moves me to express again my appreciation of your reading plan. So far, it seems to me, you have offered your patrons about as well balanced a reading program as could be derived. My objection to most new books nowadays is that they run too much to the sex or problem variety and are written by immature persons who have no experience on which to base a judgment or by people who, perhaps, are mature enough but who are indulging some sexual kink or grouch that had best be kept to themselves."

Thos. E. Hayward
New Haven, Conn.

"I still feel my first enthusiasm for The Book League and look forward eagerly every month to its selection. I feel sure that no other book club in the country offers such advantages as does The Book League.

"All the selections thus far have been excellent. I hope, as do some of the other members, that most of your selections will not be

novels, however. I do not think that this feeling is based on the suspicion that novel reading is a waste of time. Rather I think that actual human experiences, when they are told with art and understanding equal to that with which a good novel is written, possess more weight and have a more lasting effect than fiction has."

George Glazner.
Simmons University, Tex.

"May I take this opportunity of thanking you for your service to me. I feel that I have already gotten value received for my full membership fee. The last issue, *Instinct and Intelligence*, reached me in good order a couple of days ago—and it is beyond price. But that can be said of every issue thus far. The membership is a first class investment in entertainment—and culture."

Boyd E. Nero
Spokane, Wash.

"You picked the best book of them all when you selected *Instinct and Intelligence*."

Gertrude Viert
Washington, D. C.

"I have been dilatory in acknowledging the receipt of the four volumes of Well's *Outline of History*, but I assure you that I was well pleased with them. I think you are doing a wonderful thing for the reading public. Your offerings each month have been excellent and sufficiently varied to please most tastes. Of them all perhaps I liked the Hardy Poems the least, and do not very much care for the latest selection on insects and their instinct and intelligence, although admitting that the subject is undoubtedly a fascinating one. I shall read it, however, and perhaps by so doing I may acquire a belated taste for our tiny neighbors; but having lived in various parts of Africa where ants are a decided and ever-present pest, I must confess that my affection and admiration for them remains rather cool.

"May success crown your endeavors in behalf of your members!"

Mrs. Edith M. White
Amherst, Mass.

"Received my copy of *Instinct and Intelligence* last evening and was up till 2 A.M.

this morning, reading it. To say I found it interesting would be putting it very mildly. Also enjoyed *Zola and his Time*, but I can't go fiction. Am looking forward to more interesting works like the above."

Maurice Overdank
Brooklyn, N. Y.

"*Instinct and Intelligence* much the best thing you have ever done. Please send another copy for class-work with invoice to me at this address."

G. E. Harter
Toledo, O.

"Let me say that I have been more than satisfied with The Book League plan, and I hope that you meet with every success. The Monthly is a splendid idea. I have not only been well pleased with the books it contains, but I have come to look forward with a great deal of interest to the special articles, the critical notes, and the literary Review of Reviews. When the first of the bound books arrived the other day—*The Education of Henry Adams*—I was again very agreeably surprised at the unusually high quality of the binding and the fine typography."

H. J. Owens
Chicago, Ill.

"I am more than pleased by your selections. The format is beautiful. The book reviews should be the envy of any first class magazine."

Sterling A. Brown
Nashville, Tenn.

"Include my name among your delighted subscribers. Your choice of Hardy's *Winter Words* was a most happy one to me, a lover of poetry who knew him almost entirely as a novelist. I hesitate to agree with those who acclaim Mr. Sanborn's *Prima Donna* as a really great novel, although I enjoyed it and would not wish to have missed it. I would call him primarily a music critic who has achieved a creditable work in a field where we of the uninitiated who care for music can accept him without question.

"Every selection to the present has seemed to me a worthy one, and as to that I would hesitate to express an opinion other than that popularized science bores me, unless it is

really sensational as are so many of the recent developments in astronomy, physics and chemistry."

Alwyn B. Keckelely
Jackson Heights, N. Y.

"I received *The Education of Henry Adams*. All I can say is that it is 'Great.' I hope that the rest of the books will be of the same high grade of workmanship. I certainly was surprised at the choice of Major Hingston's science monograph. It is the most fascinating work I have encountered in much reading."

Harry Levin
Cleveland Plain Dealer Library
Cleveland, O.

"I have nothing but the highest commendation for your project and each monthly magazine has been admirable in every respect."

"I wish you the greatest success and assure you of my esteem and cooperation."

George L. Casey
Jackson Heights, N. Y.

"I wish to congratulate you on the splendid material that you are furnishing in the monthly."

Otis M. Balis
Germantown, Pa.

"The *Outline of History* which is one of my selections of the twenty-four books offered has been received and I am very much pleased with it indeed. Only sorry I haven't enough money to buy subscriptions for about a dozen folks I know who I am sure would greatly appreciate the splendid service you are offering."

Billie Orth
Washington, D. C.

"It is a satisfaction to see the quality of the paper, printing, and binding of the book received; and I have found similar satisfaction in the physical make-up as well as the substantial character of the publications in the Monthly to date. My best wishes go forward for the success of your undertaking which seems to aim intelligently at real merit of form and substance."

V. S. Thomas
Wilmington, Del.

"Immediately upon seeing my Book League *Henry Adams*, a wavering friend announced her determination to subscribe. How can you give us such a superb 5 dollar edition? Surely the League is bound towards the greatest, most complete success its most ardent admirers can imagine."

"And please accept most grateful thanks for the highly desirable and most welcome tougher cover on the April Monthly."

O. A. Williamson
Greenville, Miss.

"It affords us pleasure to make remittance for a service which provides such a wealth of enjoyment and better understanding of some of the worthwhile literary writers."

Joseph D. Glass
Los Angeles, Cal.

"The first books on my subscription but recently arrived. Accept my appreciation of your choice and format. Zola has proved immensely interesting—and I have no doubt but that the others will prove likewise."

"Your plan will prove a winner—and as book clubs go, I firmly believe you will outdo all competition."

A. F. Zimmerman
Juneau, Alaska

"When I opened the last cardboard book container and saw *Instinct and Intelligence* and reading further knew that these terms were applied to insects, I couldn't help exclaiming "Thank God for ants, bees and spiders! Bless the Lord! At least they were not Prima Donnas."

"The second volume of Mr. Sanborn's novel of great length still lies before me unopened, nor can I bring myself, after my experience with the first, to plow through its pages. If the supply falls short, you can count on at least one extra copy."

"For a concrete example of hackneyed style and lack of rhythm, take for example, just as a random shot, page 29—3rd paragraph. Isn't that like a school girl's composition? And that is only one of a dozen other examples which might be quoted. Poor old Spinti, who, I gather, has some small meed of culture, is made to talk more like a banana vendor than a musician."

"Contrary to criticism from the most eminent lights, St. John Ervine, Mark Van

Doren, Julia Peterkin *et al.*, I, who am practically nobody, and should bow in submission to their superior judgment, fail to see how a book like *Prima Donna*, written in the most puerile of styles, recounting the most stereotyped experiences, ever won the notice of the critics, much less their praise. Of course recommendations from opera singers should mean little or nothing in the literary world, as the opera singer's standard of English is apt to be somewhat biased.

"My adverse criticism is just the buzzing of a small, faraway insect—but it has been proven that sometimes, even they, have 'Instinct and Intelligence.'"

Marguerite Pace Corcoran
Palatka, Fla.

"I feel particularly fortunate in having the Monthly volumes—especially *Winter Words*, *The Rebel Generation* and the last one, *Instinct and Intelligence*."

Mrs. Paul Jennings
Grossmont, Cal.

"I received yesterday my four volumes of *The Outline of History*, and, in scanning hurriedly through them, I am well pleased with the way the material is handled in a four-volume work. They look attractive and are books of which I can be proud. I only hope the others live up to the reputation which these have set."

Jim Jay Wilcox
Cadell, Kan.

"You have no doubt received much favorable comment on your plan, but I wish to add my appreciation, and let you know that I consider your idea a splendid one."

E. C. Harwood
Troy, N. Y.

"As one of your charter members I am writing to compliment you on the quality of the monthly books you have published. *Zola and his Time* and *The Rebel Generation* struck me as being particularly happy choices."

Ramsay Moran
San Francisco, Cal.

"Just received Henry Adams book. Great!"

Alba Satterthwaite
Huntington, N. Y.

"This letter is to let you know that I am enjoying Major Hingston's *Instinct and Intelligence* very much indeed, and sincerely hope that the bulk of your readers have sufficient background to appreciate so remarkable a piece of work.

"But I should like very much to know just who the Major is, and what his formal training. I am very much surprised to find that I have heard of the gentleman in no other connection. And this Professor Poulton, of whom so many nice things are said in the Preface, just who is he, and where may we learn more of him?"

"I should like to have more non-fiction in The Book League Monthly—even sociology, anthropology, or biography. But good fiction is always relished."

Phyllis L. Taylor
New York, N. Y.

"For the past six months I have been receiving the numbers of The Book League Monthly and wish to take this opportunity to tell you how very interesting I find the books you have selected."

Snyder E. Herrin
Herrin, Ill.

"I have received Henry Adams. Congratulations upon a fine piece of work!"

C. V. Chesley
Hanover, N. H.

"I have today received a copy of The Book League Monthly for April and a copy of *The Education of Henry Adams*. Both are very welcome . . . I feel that every number is very much worth while."

Elizabeth Marks
Yonkers, N. Y.

"I cannot tell you how much I appreciate The Book League for what the Monthly contains, as well as *The Education of Henry Adams* which has just arrived. A literary friend of mine is signing up next Tuesday. She is literary editor of the local daily and knows a good thing when she sees it. She read my copy of *Prima Donna* as also did her assistant.

"And the current issue of The Book League Monthly with the account of insect

life! How did you guess it would interest us? It was a breath from the country. Keep up the good work."

Elmer Nicholas
Evanston, Ill.

"I am getting a tremendous amount of pleasure out of my membership. Your last, *Instinct and Intelligence*, hit me in a very welcome mood as I am at present working on forest entomology."

Frederick S. Eaton
New Haven, Conn.

"I am enjoying the Monthly immensely."

Elvina P. Dillon
Manchester, N. H.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed your choice of books so far."

Goldie Jacowitz
Brooklyn, N. Y.

"Your monthly editions have afforded my family and myself a great deal of worthy pleasure."

Mrs. Ralph Honig
Bronx, N. Y.

"I have enjoyed all your books so far received. I think your adventure in a Book League Monthly has been very successful and I hope will continue."

Mrs. A. L. Stull
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

"I was delighted to have *The Education of Henry Adams*."

Mrs. H. C. Thornton
Webster Grove, Mo.

"I was reading Bertrand Russell's introduction to *The Insect Comedy* in the recent issues of your quite lovely monthly journal. I also found a happy exhilaration in reading the book reviews.

"The cover design is exquisite always. The paper and print make reading a delight. The general impression one carries away is very favorable.

"A spontaneous and most creative impulse prompts me to praise you and your venture

as splendid to the nth degree. Believe me, your Book League promises brilliantly."

Samuel D. Schmalhausen, Ph. D.
New York, N. Y.

"My first bound volume, *The Education of Henry Adams*, came today. As to appearance it exceeds my expectation. I would like to have had the imprint of The Book League a little more prominent."

William Van Vliet, A. B.
Western Academy, Hull, Ia.

"I have just received my first copy of the book, *The Education of Henry Adams*. I want to assure you that it is all you advertised in the way of appearance and general make-up and more. I don't think the most critical 'bookologist' can find a bit of fault with it."

O. W. Hoop
Lieut. Col. Infantry, U. S. A.

"I am very much pleased with the Monthly and think your selections so far have been good. Was especially glad to have the last one, *Instinct and Intelligence*."

G. S. Hoss
Chicago, Ill.

"I received, yesterday, the May Book, *Louis XIV*, for which, many thanks. I know I am going to enjoy it.

"I was interested in The Forum this month, and glad to see that two people, and one of them at least, a man, shared my views of *Prima Donna*. It was an interesting book, and I finished it, but why, oh why, can't we have books which do not make a point of questionable situations, treating them as the logical and natural life for the characters portrayed!

"I think I, like Henry W. Elson, am old fashioned, because I believe that one does not need to run the gamut of the Ten Commandments to know life, to live life, and to live it gloriously! There is a more 'abundant life' than that which so many authors of problem novels are giving us as the 'real' thing. This 'real life', and 'true-to-type' life, which everyone, critic and layman alike, is harping on at present, isn't 'real'; it seems to me it is an attempt to drown in so-called 'realism' one's failure to live the 'true' life,

and by calling their existence 'real', give it the sanction of society, that they may continue to exist without molestation or anathema. Just living is 'real' enough, without having 'realness' thrown at us from all angles, under the guise of 'literature', and what not. Is this too harsh a criticism? I do not mean that we must have 'preachy' books; we want to read of human beings, their problems, and the solution of them. But why weave the same dun-colored threads through the tapestry, when there are so many bright, shining ones to use?

"Is it hopeless to feel that all glory, sacrifice, tears, and the 'bigness' of folk's souls can be portrayed, can reach the heights. Must they first wallow in the mire, or root amongst the husks, like the swine of Circe?"

"I hope you will pardon my writing at this length, but so many books, infected, it seems to me, with 'sexitis', are lauded and praised for their 'beauty', that this thing has just been seething in my mind for some time, and the courage of the members in this month's Forum, has given me courage too. If professors have the privilege, may a layman?"

"Can't you publishers give a gentle hint to the authors to inject just a little of the serum of 'decency' into their volumes, and perhaps cure this epidemic of 'sexitis'? Would it be possible for them to do that, and still keep the high points in the careers of their characters?"

"Perhaps our authors would say, 'Well, that's what the public wants.' Perhaps it is; at least it is what the public gets—or is told that it wants in the reviews of 'best sellers.' Why can't we rave equally over the more worthwhile books? I mean really worthwhile ones, not stories, which if written by some authors would be taboo, but because it is sugar-coated with the criterion of 'worthwhile' or 'intellectual' gets by regardless of the fact that it leaves a bitter taste after it has been swallowed. I wonder sometimes that the really big authors waste their time writing so much trash, or writing of situations in a trashy fashion; it seems as though that is all it is, despite the fact that it is dressed in a silk frock, and balances a tea cup to perfection.

"I hope you will not think me too severe a critic. It may sound harsher than I mean it. But I have eased my mind and I feel better—and then you have asked for opinions.

"I want to tell you how much my mother and I enjoyed *The Rebel Generation*; we read it together, and thought it splendid.

"Thank you for all the books I have had, and your attention to this long letter."

Komah G. Atwater
So. Hadley Falls, Mass.

"Your project is entitled to a big success."

A. B. Brumberg
Ironton, Ohio

"Five volumes have arrived of the bound classics I have selected and I want to express my appreciation of their excellent form and binding. You are to be congratulated on being able to put out such first-rate reprints which alone are worth the subscription price. The current numbers of the Monthly cannot be expected to be all of permanent value, even though they have temporary interest. Those worth while can be bound later. In this way one does not clutter one's library with books of transient interest. In short, your plan is ideal and within most persons' means. May you soon reach the top."

Dr. Robert Elman
Washington University
St. Louis, Mo.

"May I take this occasion to compliment you on your addition to an already noteworthy Board of Editors of an outstanding genius such as Eugene O'Neill. His entrance into this sort of enterprise puts it for me on an even higher level than the by no means low one at which I held The Book League.

"I hope a little constructive criticism will not prove unwelcome. I have dabbled a little in typography and the allied arts, and consider the general make-up of the Monthly very good indeed. However, I have bound several copies of the Monthly (invariably giving me an edition superior to the trade one). If the table of contents sheet had been left blank, and if the first three pages of Mr. Mumford's study had been transposed elsewhere, how nicely would the last folio be detachable from the rest of the magazine, leaving the book intact and ready for binding! I appreciate that such a change would add somewhat to your expenses; I am equally cognizant of the fact that The Book League is already offering its members a

genuine bargain, but here the added expense seems minor compared to the benefit to those of us who wish to put into more permanent form those numbers of the Monthly (of which there will be, at the present indication, very many) which seem worth more than a single cursory reading.

"May I add that I greatly enjoy The Literary Scene and the Review of Reviews. Only The Nation, I think, can compare with these sections in their frank and interesting estimates."

R. Wead
Peoria, Ill.

"I have today received the first 'classic' on The Book League's program, *The Education of Henry Adams*, and I am delighted to find it is such a handsome and well printed volume.

"I am sending in the list of the other books I should like to receive. I have marked only eight and I presume I may take the balance from next year's list. For I certainly intend to continue with the League. The selections have been excellent."

Francis McCoy
Seattle, Washington

"Thank you for the copy of *Instinct and Intelligence*. I have read portions of it to several of my classes and expect to use it for many more. The students never fail to be thrilled; and anything which will actually excite youngsters while they think they are studying has passed the acid test for literature."

Ernest Mortenson
New York, N. Y.

"I am certainly more than enthusiastic about your plan and feel, after reading *The Rebel Generation* and *Prima Donna*, that membership in your organization is going to prove a source of stimulation to our life in Hawaii, which is prone to grow sluggish and utterly too self-contented under Southern Skies."

Louise G. Orrick
Kahuku, Hawaii

"I am delighted with the books I have received up to date and am an enthusiastic supporter of the League."

Clayton Jenkins
Provo, Ut.

"*The Education of Henry Adams* came a week or so ago and I was astounded. The binding, the quality of paper, the fine print caused me to pick the book again and again to make sure that I was not dreaming. The book itself however gave me the greatest delight. To your members, who, like myself, are busy educating themselves and look rather doubtfully at the vast extent of modern knowledge, this book should prove an invaluable help. Adams' conception of education as something dynamic and fluid, weaving itself into a vast synthesis, is sometimes forgotten in these days of specialization. One of your members thinks that it is too early to print the book yet, but I guess you have quite a few members, who like myself are still in their teens, and therefore were too young to have read the book when it was published. Everything about the League pleases me so far and I hope you grow as you deserve. Let us know the size of the League from time to time in the Monthly so we can all watch its growth."

C. H. Dawson
Lyndhurst, N. J.

"I wish to express my pleasure in the binding, paper, print and general appearance of *Henry Adams*. If the same high standard of quality is maintained in the other books to be published, you will have a delighted membership.

"Your monthly selections, too, have been diversified, enjoyable, splendid—and so artistically bound.

"I am wishing the League long life and success."

Julia P. da Ponte
New Orleans, La.

"Let me express my thanks for your greatly valued choice for last month, *Instinct and Intelligence*. I sincerely hope to see more of this type of book. It is intensely interesting and instructive at the same time."

Hyman S. Orchin
Cleveland, O.

"Yesterday *Louis XIV* came and today the preceding publications. I have looked them all over and am greatly pleased with them. A real achievement—an almost unbelievable one. The format of the Monthly is beautiful

and pleasing to the touch and eye, and such a diversity of subjects—science, fiction, biography—a most commendable program.

"I admit readily that I was astounded.

"Having belonged to two other book clubs (one other now) I was naturally critical. I can find very little to criticize, however.

"By the way, perhaps you would be interested to know why I happened to join.

"Before you began to publish you asked me to become a charter member. . . .

"Time passed. I heard of the League off and on, so to speak. A tiny notice here, or something of the sort. Very mysterious, I thought. Then suddenly—about two weeks ago I saw your advertisement in the New York Times Book Review. Upon glancing over your list of well established works I saw H. G. Wells' *Outline*. That decided me. You must be worth while, I said, to give that.

"An added impetus was the fact that a few weeks before I had paid \$7.50 for that volume. \$7.50!

"Plain disgust!

"That decided me.

"Then I had to figure out which club to drop. It was hard, but your list of books decided me. I dropped the club that presented its subscribers mostly with novels. Don't misunderstand, I like novels. But so few are really good that one is hardly tempted to buy them.

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of THE BOOK LEAGUE MONTHLY

published Monthly at Camden, N. J.

for April 1st, 1929

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